

EXAMINING THE RACIAL PRESSURE ON STUDENT-ATHLETES IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS

by

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We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. The University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the following:

To Merissa—your unwavering belief in me and your encouragement have been my strength through this journey. This would not have been possible without you by my side.

To my parents—Dad, your advice and wisdom have guided me more than you know. Mom, your resilience and sacrifices have taught me how to stay strong.

And to my younger self—who dared to dream big, worked hard, and never gave up. This is proof that you were always capable.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	10
PAST RESEARCH.....	12
<i>Deficiencies of Past Research</i> .....	12
<i>Strengths of Past Research</i> .....	13
<i>Theories Utilized</i> .....	13
PRESSURE AND KEY TERMS .....	14
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	15
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	16
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	17
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>18</b>
OVERVIEW .....	18
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	18
<i>Critical Race Theory (CRT)</i> .....	19
<i>Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)</i> .....	21
RELATED LITERATURE .....	22
RACE IN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS.....	22
<i>Racial Dynamics in Education</i> .....	22
<i>Historical Context of Race in Sports</i> .....	24
STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCES .....	25
<i>Racial Experiences</i> .....	25
<i>Balancing Academics and Athletics</i> .....	27
PSYCHOLOGY OF BIPOC STUDENT-ATHLETE .....	29
<i>Mental Health of BIPOC Student-Athletes</i> .....	29
<i>COVID-19 Impact</i> .....	31
<i>Social and Racial Identity Development</i> .....	31
<i>Support Services</i> .....	33
SUMMARY / PURPOSE OF LITERATURE REVIEW .....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....</b>	<b>35</b>
RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN .....	35
STUDY CONTEXT .....	36
STUDY PARTICIPANTS .....	37
<i>Participant Demographics and Profiles</i> .....	40
POSITIONALITY .....	42
DATA COLLECTION .....	43
DATA ANALYSIS .....	45
VALIDITY .....	46
RELIABILITY.....	47
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....</b>	<b>48</b>
OVERVIEW .....	48
SYSTEMIC FACTORS: INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCES AND RACIAL REPRESENTATION IN ATHLETICS.....	50
SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS: COPING, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SELF-EFFICACY .....	55
SUPPORT SYSTEMS: SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, AND ADVOCACY FOR EQUITY .....	60
FUTURE STRATEGIES: ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN ATHLETICS .....	65
UNEXPECTED OR OUTLIER FINDINGS.....	68

<i>Outlier Finding #1</i> .....	69
<i>Outlier Finding #2</i> .....	70
CROSS-PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS .....	71
<i>Cross Participants Difference #1</i> .....	72
<i>Cross Participants Difference #2</i> .....	72
EXAMINATION OF FINDINGS .....	72
<i>Summary of Key Findings</i> .....	72
<i>Interpretation of Findings</i> .....	73
CONCLUSION .....	74
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>76</b>
OVERVIEW .....	76
STUDY-SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS .....	76
POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS.....	78
<i>Policy Recommendations</i> .....	78
<i>Practical Recommendations</i> .....	79
STUDY LIMITATIONS OVERVIEW.....	81
<i>Study Limitations</i> .....	81
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .....	82
TIMELINESS OF THE STUDY .....	84
CONCLUSION .....	85
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>87</b>
APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES .....	87
APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT DATA .....	92
APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT SPORT DATA .....	93
APPENDIX D – DEMOGRAPHIC INTEREST SURVEYS.....	93
APPENDIX E – RECRUITMENT EMAIL AND FLYER.....	95
APPENDIX F – YOUTH ASSENT FORM .....	99
APPENDIX G – PARENTAL CONSENT FORM.....	102
APPENDIX H – ADULT CONSENT FORM.....	105
APPENDIX I – PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION .....	108
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>111</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Participant Information.....	40, 99
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## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Sports Represented by Participants.....	100
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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

National Youth Sports Strategy (NYSS)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)



## **ABSTRACT**

High school student-athletes face pressures as they strive for their athletic goals. For student-athletes of color, these challenges can be increased by racial factors that shape their experiences within high school athletics (Adeyemo, 2022; Adeyemo & Morris, 2020; Ortega, 2019). This qualitative, interview-based case study examines the racial pressures faced by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other student-athletes of color at a private high school in the Southwest United States. Utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) as theoretical frameworks, this study explores how race influences the student-athlete experience and also identifies systemic and individual supports that can enhance educational and athletic outcomes. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with student-athletes, coaches, and parents. Findings suggest that BIPOC student-athletes navigate negative experiences, including racial stereotyping and limited representation. They also have positive experiences within this institution through leadership and community support. This study shows the need for schools and athletic programs to implement measures that promote equity. Some recommendations include an increase in mentorship opportunities, to diversify coaching staff, and create structured mental health support for student-athletes. Educational institutions need to better support BIPOC student-athletes in achieving success both on and off the field.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

I have dedicated my career thus far to supporting student-athletes — helping them recover from injuries, listening to their stories and experiences, and creating an environment for them to excel in their goals. Over time, I’ve come to understand that the challenges these student-athletes face go far beyond the physical. Student-athletes today are under pressure to succeed not only in their sport but also in the classroom (Geisz, 2018). For those who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), these pressures are often compounded by racialized experiences both on and off the playing field (Griffith, 2017).

I did not know this student-athlete well. We met once — during a weekend morning game of basketball with others affiliated with the institution. This individual had already graduated from the school where I once worked. I knew the name before I ever saw the face because people spoke with deep admiration. This student-athlete was described as a gifted basketball player, a leader in the community, and “a best friend to all.” The story ended in tragedy. After leaving the area and earning a scholarship to play collegiate sports, this student-athlete died by suicide a couple of years after high school.

I never had the chance to know this individual as a student-athlete, but the name is still mentioned throughout the institution — in the stories that friends and coaches continue to tell, and in the grief that remains. This loss is not isolated. Suicide rates among high school student-athletes are rising, and BIPOC student-athletes, particularly Black student-athletes, are disproportionately affected (Labuhn, 2021). This story is a heartbreaking reminder of the weight student-athletes carry.

This study begins with that student-athlete. It is dedicated to individuals like this one — friendly, talented, and admired by many. My hope is that this research not only sheds light on the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes but also centers their voices — including the voice of one who can no longer speak for themselves.

The media frequently highlights the racial pressures faced in America by athletes, particularly in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement and other racial justice initiatives. Prominent athletes like LeBron James, Muhammad Ali, and Colin Kaepernick have used their platforms to advocate for change, emphasizing the role of athletics in addressing racial issues in America (Edwards, 2017). Other groups of individuals, including student-athletes, can feel this racial pressure that is brought on systemically through many institutions and people across the United States (Kelly & Aden, 2022). Two examples of the systemic racism in America in sports include resource disparities affecting underserved communities at the high school level and participation disparities between geographical areas (Black et al., 2022).

To safeguard the well-being of our students, it is imperative to address these pressures both systemically and locally. We need effective strategies to help student-athletes cope with the stress associated with sports. Research is crucial to understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by BIPOC student-athletes. By focusing on this issue, we can develop interventions that enhance their engagement in sports and improve their overall outcomes, two of which are graduating high school and successfully transitioning to adulthood with the skills learned from athletics. It is essential to act swiftly to ensure that BIPOC student-athletes are supported and empowered to thrive in their sporting endeavors.

## **Past Research**

Studies have identified factors contributing to academic pressure and stress on students in the classroom, but these often do not specifically address the pressures faced by BIPOC student-athletes (Deb et al., 2015; Galloway & Conner, 2015; Walburg, 2014). Student-athletes experience unique pressures, intensified by the rise of social media and sports culture, which need further examination (Taylor et al., 2015). Unlike their non-athlete classmates, student-athletes must balance the demands of coursework with the obligations of team membership and physical fitness (Moreland et al., 2018). They may also receive inadequate academic support from coaches, teammates, and other staff who lack academic qualifications. However, through sport not all student-athletes achieve their goals, leading to increased participation but limited sports opportunities (Adeyemo & Morris, 2020).

### ***Deficiencies of Past Research***

Research on the pressures faced by student-athletes within high school athletics is limited, particularly regarding racial pressure. Recent events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the Operation Varsity Blues college admissions scandal, have brought some attention to this issue. Operation Varsity Blues exposed how high school student-athletes in less popular sports, like water polo, rowing, and sailing, gained admission preferences at prestigious institutions through payment of college personnel, including athletic administrators (Lens, 2021). Some White students even posed as Black students to benefit from affirmative action in gaining admission (Watts, 2021). This case highlighted the intense pressure and competition for athletic scholarships and the ethical challenges in the recruitment process. High school student-athletes often seek collegiate athletic scholarships due to financial constraints, aspirations for economic success, and the desire to leave adverse situations behind (Daren, 2020). These opportunities are

significant, given the substantial earnings potential for professional athletes (US BLS, 2023).

Male professional athletes in the NFL, NBA, and MLB, have a minimum contract pay that ranges from \$362,000 to \$680,000 per season. That is life-changing money for many individuals and families in the US.

### ***Strengths of Past Research***

Research on the negative impact of sports on high school student-athletes is less frequent, possibly due to concerns about revealing misconduct or harm to student-athletes but research still exists (De Rycke & De Bosscher, 2021). Instead, most studies focus on collegiate student-athletes rather than high school student-athletes (Ryan et al., 2018; Rubin, 2016; Moreland et al., 2018). Balancing academics and athletics can be demanding, with some students prioritizing sports at the expense of their academic performance and health (Cross & Fouke, 2019). Lack of adequate mental health support can lead to increased anxiety and depression among student-athletes (Egan, 2019). They must make sacrifices to complete their education and find fulfilling life experiences (Darcy & Dowse, 2013; O'Neill et al., 2013). High school student-athletes face mental health concerns, and suicide rates have been rising among high school students (Weigand et al., 2013). While athletic activities offer advantages that may protect mental health, specific stressors related to sports can negatively impact student-athletes (Kegelaers et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2021; Lundqvist et al., 2023). These issues extend beyond academics and mental health to include their sense of belonging within the school community, particularly regarding race-related issues affecting BIPOC student-athletes (Griffith et al., 2017).

### ***Theories Utilized***

The two theories that will be utilized to examine the data are Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Self-efficacy theory will help understand how student-athletes'

behaviors and motivation are changing because of the racial pressures they are facing (Bandura & Adams, 1977). These theories will be used to help examine the influence this has on the confidence and performance experienced by student-athletes. This can offer valuable insights into how the belief in their ability to perform specific tasks or handle social experiences influence their behavior and outcomes to help improve educational experiences. Critical Race Theory will help examine the data by exploring how intersecting identities contribute to the experiences of individuals and how student-athletes can tell their own stories (Bell, 1976). This theory will be used to help examine racial pressures and uncover underlying structures of racism and inequality to help improve the educational experiences of student-athletes.

### **Pressure and Key Terms**

“Pressure” refers to the mental or emotional strain individuals experience when they perceive that they must meet high demands or expectations (Mitsu, 2023).

Pressure in Sports is the stress and expectations athletes face related to their performance, competition outcomes, and the need to meet the standards set by coaches, teams, or themselves (Mesagno & Beckmann, 2017).

Racial Pressure denotes the additional stress and expectations placed on individuals due to their race. This can include stereotypes, discrimination, and the need to prove themselves against racial biases, which can uniquely impact student-athletes of color (Snipe, 2023).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic framework that examines the relationship between race, law, and power. It posits that racism is not just an individual bias but is embedded in legal systems and policies (Bell, 1976).

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task (Bandura & Adams, 1977).

High School Athletics involve sports programs that are organized within the educational system, focusing on the development of students' physical, social, and academic skills (Howard, 2023).

College-bound Student-Athletes are high school students who plan to attend college and continue their athletic careers. These individuals often balance rigorous academic and athletic schedules in preparation for collegiate-level competition and education. Some high school student-athletes in the study may aspire to be a college-bound student-athlete.

Systemic and Individual Supports refer to the structures and resources provided at both institutional and personal levels to aid student-athletes. Systemic support can include policies, programs, and services designed to promote equity and success, while individual support can involve personal guidance from coaches, mentors, and family.

Educational Experiences encompass the range of academic, social, and extracurricular activities that students engage in during their schooling. For student-athletes, this includes balancing classroom learning with sports commitments, developing time management skills, and navigating the dual pressures of academic and athletic performance.

Overall well-being is an outcome for student-athletes that refers to the comprehensive state of their physical, mental, emotional, social, and academic health.

Student-athlete success is a holistic outcome that goes beyond just winning games or earning scholarships. It reflects how well they thrive academically, athletically, socially, and personally, while preparing for life beyond high school.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study offers an understanding of the pressures impacting high school BIPOC student-athletes at this one institution. By conducting this research, the goal is to provide insights

that foster a healthier and more supportive environment for this group, which can enhance these student-athletes' overall well-being and success. Five different groups of individuals could benefit from this study. Those groups are researchers, athletic administrators, athletic coaches, student-athletes, and educational practitioners. This study is pivotal for student-athletes as it aims to improve the educational experiences of BIPOC student-athletes through athletics (Mesagno & Beckmann, 2017). The goal is that student-athletes who read this paper will realize they are not alone with racial issues surrounding sports and get any help they need from others around them or professionals. By examining the unique challenges faced by these students, the research seeks to inform and train athletic administrators, coaches, and educational practitioners on effective support strategies. The goal is to create a presentation for these groups based on the results of this paper to inform them and give them support strategies. Additionally, the study will contribute to the existing body of research on high school athletics (Richardson, 2018), providing valuable insights and recommendations for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all BIPOC student-athletes for researchers going forward to perform additional research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative interview-based case study is to focus on high school student-athletes who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or other People of Color, specifically examining the racial pressures they face within high school athletics. This will be done by concentrating on sophomores, juniors, and seniors who participate in athletics at their high school. In addition, their coaches and parents at the institution are included in the study. This is to create a more nuanced view of the study questions. This research aims to uncover the unique challenges and systemic barriers that impact their experiences and opportunities in sports. This



exploration will shed light on the intersection of race, education, and athletics, thus highlighting the need for equitable support and resources for these high school student-athletes.

### **Research Questions**

The main questions that will be addressed in this research study are:

1. How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?
2. What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color better and improve their overall educational experiences?

This literature review will be organized into four main sections. First, it will explore the theoretical framework, focusing on Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. Second, it will examine race in high school athletics through historical context and the broader racial dynamics in education. Third, it will review the educational experiences of high school student-athletes, particularly regarding racial experiences and the balance between academics and athletics. Finally, the review will address the psychological experiences of BIPOC student-athletes, with a focus on mental health, the impact of COVID-19, racial and social identity development, and the availability of support services.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Overview**

For this literature review, there will be multiple academic peer-reviewed references used from a variety of different authors on the topics of high school athletics and student-athletes. The databases used to find these articles were The University of Arizona University Libraries database, Google Scholar, WorldCat database, and the JSTOR database. During this literature search, the following keywords and phrases were utilized to find the articles: racial pressure for student-athletes, high school student-athlete racial experiences, race in education, balancing academics and athletics, social and racial identity, mental health for student-athletes, and benefits of high school athletics. The purpose of this literature review is to review the current research and literature on high school athletics, the positive and negative experiences of BIPOC student-athletes, the mental health support that is available to high school student-athletes, and the racial pressures that student-athletes are facing within the context of high school athletics and their academic journeys.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The two theories that are used in this study for the theoretical framework are Self-Efficacy Theory and Critical Race Theory. These two theories provide important components to be able to understand the racial pressures that student-athletes are facing, whether that be from self-imposed means or those around them. Self-efficacy theory is defined as an individual's belief in the capacity to execute behaviors varies from person to person and on the situation. There are four components of SET, the first component of self-efficacy theory is vicarious experiences, which is when someone lives through other people's experiences. This ties directly into the critical race theory tenet of interest convergence, which is defined as social change for

minority groups occurring when their interests align with those of the majority (Bell, 1976; Bandura & Adams, 1977). Both subtopics from the theories explain how others can have an impact on student-athletes, and that will be explored within this study. The way these two theories will work together within this study is by being able to explore the behaviors and identities of the participants. Critical Race Theory has a focus on the story and how race is a factor within US society (Bell, 1976). Both are incorporated within the research questions; the participants will be describing their stories and personal experiences. Self-efficacy theory can help explain the behaviors of the participants (Bandura & Adams, 1977). In summary, Self-Efficacy Theory will be able to describe behaviors, but Critical Race Theory will be able to tell us the personal narrative of racial pressure for these student-athletes.

### ***Critical Race Theory (CRT)***

The first theory that will be used within the study is Critical Race Theory. It was developed by Derrick Bell (1976), and it was used to study how race is a factor in the everyday lives of Black Americans and other racial minority groups. It is also talked about within the context of five central tenets, which are the belief that racism is normal or ordinary, not aberrant, in US society; interest convergence or material determinism; race as a social construct; intersectionality and anti-essentialism; voice or counter-narrative. As applied to the study, this theory will help understand how race and racial pressures impact high school student-athletes.

The first tenet of CRT is that racism is ordinary and embedded in societal structures. This means discriminatory policies and practices are ingrained in institutions like education, athletics, and the legal system. For example, the enactment of colorblind policies within college athletics (Cooper et al., 2017). Because racism is engraved into the policies, it is difficult to dismantle without addressing these systemic structures.

The second core tenet of CRT is interest convergence, which suggests that racial progress only occurs when it benefits the dominant (typically white) group. An example is back in the 1970s when Black athletes were assimilated at HWIs by providing athletic opportunities (Cooper et al., 2017). This tenet highlights how racial justice advancements often come with limitations, as they tend to be supported only when they align with broader societal implications rather than being based on a commitment to equality.

The third tenet of CRT is that race is a social construct. Racial categories have been created and reshaped over time to serve specific social and political purposes (Howe et al., 2023). Some groups have seen a shift in social perception into whiteness, demonstrating how racial classifications can be shaped by historical and social contexts rather than fixed, scientific categories (Yang and Koshy, 2016).

The fourth tenet of CRT is intersectionality, and this argues that race does not function in isolation but intersects with other identities such as gender, socioeconomic class, and sexuality. For example, Asian British women who play football were perceived as tomboys by others because football is known as predominantly a men's sport. There is also a hyper-sexualization of Black woman athletes and at the same time, these athletes' athletic abilities and successes were disregarded (Lim et al., 2021).

The final tenet is the importance of voice and counter-narratives, which emphasize the lived experiences of people of color. History often reflects the perspectives of those in power, while counter-narratives provide alternative viewpoints that reveal the realities of racial oppression. For example, the deflection of focus from “Black Lives Matter” to the more socially acceptable and racially invalidating terminology of “All Lives Matter” (Cooper., 2017).

Critical race theory has been studied regarding student-athletes because of the race factor that is present within the context of sports. For example, in one study CRT was used as a tool for learning how sports have a positive impact on the development of youth sports through the experiences of athletic directors (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020). In another study, researchers centered the lived experiences of student-athletes of color through their participation in organized sports. They found that if there are mentorship programs in place for Black student-athletes, they will be more successful than their counterparts who do not have a mentor (Bimper, 2015). These mentors were found to be more successful if they were of the same race as the student-athletes. This was because the mentors understand the stereotypes and effects within sports so they can help the student-athletes navigate these issues and obtain their voice (Griffith et al., 2017).

### ***Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)***

The other theory used in this study is the Self-Efficacy Theory, developed by Albert Bandura and Nancy E. Adams in 1977. The theory suggests that an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary for specific performance attainments, such as motivation, behavior, and social environment, varies from person to person depending on the situation. Applying this theory helps to understand how high school sports participation influences the behaviors of BIPOC high school student-athletes. The central tenets for self-efficacy theory are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Mastery experiences are when you successfully complete tasks or overcoming challenges and this strengthens self-efficacy, while repeated failures can weaken it. Vicarious experiences are observing others successfully completing a task, which can enhance one's belief in their own ability. Social persuasion highlights the role of encouragement,

feedback, and verbal support from others, such as coaches or peers. Physiological and emotional states influence self-efficacy, as individuals interpret their physical and emotional responses, such as stress, fatigue, or anxiety.

Self-efficacy theory regarding student-athletes and their motivations has been studied before, regarding the roles of parents and coaches (Wittkowski et al., 2017). This study instead focuses on the racial pressures faced by student-athletes. Perceived self-inefficacy can lead individuals to approach intimidating and stressful situations more anxiously, lowering their confidence in their ability to perform well. It can also drive them to resort to unethical means such as cheating to achieve their goals (Ring & Kavussanu, 2018). The self-efficacy theory poses that efficacy beliefs are crucial for both professional and self-guided behavioral change tactics. For instance, increasing coaches' knowledge of sports psychology can boost self-efficacy in players, helping them achieve their goals (Feddersen et al., 2020).

Some studies highlight how self-efficacy can serve as a tool for behavior change or as a measure of confidence in performing behaviors in various settings (Rodríguez-Oliveros et al., 2022; Sweet et al., 2012). Self-efficacy theory has been used as a treatment tool, such as in the original study on treating snake phobias (Bandura & Adams, 1977), this study will use it in a different way, to understand the impact of racial pressures on student-athletes behaviors and motivations while participating in high school athletics.

## **Related Literature**

### **Race in High School Athletics**

#### ***Racial Dynamics in Education***

High school sports are an extension of the classroom; therefore, understanding the dynamics of race and education is essential to grasp the factors that influence race and high

school athletics. The role race plays in education has been researched to better understand how the educational system affects youth who identify as BIPOC. For example, educational researchers have examined the racialized dimensions of U.S. education policy and how white supremacist ideologies manifest within these policies (Nikolaidis, 2023; O'Brien & Killen, 2023). Examples include inequitable school funding systems that disproportionately affect BIPOC students, de facto segregation through school and district boundaries, and higher rates of disciplinary actions such as suspension and expulsion (Chatterji et al., 2023).

Educational theories such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) are currently under attack, with far-right activists seeking to ban CRT in educational institutions and even entire states across the United States (Richmond et al., 2024). An analysis of CRT knowledge revealed that opponents of CRT deny anti-Black racism, believe CRT harms white individuals, and view conversations about race as divisive (Richmond et al., 2024). Connecting these three themes to education and athletics, it becomes clear how this can affect student-athletes. Discussing race is a crucial component of CRT, and adopting a colorblind approach can ignore systemic issues and strip students of their cultural identity within schools (Modica, 2015).

Within the context of sports and education, the role of race cannot be ignored. Research shows that social class, race/ethnicity, and gender are important identities for students and student-athletes (Hextrum et al., 2024). Given the national focus on racial injustice and inequality, race and sports have become increasingly intertwined (Richmond et al., 2024). Racism remains a permanent and deeply rooted issue within the foundations of U.S. education and sports, upheld by policies that reinforce the property rights of White people over Black people and other people of color (Adeyemo, 2022).

### ***Historical Context of Race in Sports***

The historical context of race in sports reveals a complex interplay of social, political, and economic factors that have shaped the participation, representation, and perception of athletes of color over the past century. For example, *Brown v. Board of Education* had a profound impact on high school sports. Before the landmark 1954 decision, only a select number of Black athletes outside the South found initial success in integrated high school sports and continued their achievements at some of the most prestigious predominantly white colleges in the country (Wiggins, 2010). Otherwise, most Black athletes, especially in the South, did not enjoy the same opportunities (Wiggins, 2010). Those who did participate in high school athletics often faced inequitable treatment and were not shielded from the harsh realities of Jim Crow America. Moreover, participation in sports does not guarantee a quality education or academic success (Wiggins, 2010). The academic performance of Black student-athletes in the first half of the twentieth century varied significantly. Although specific graduation rates from this period are unavailable, it is clear that before 1954, some Black athletes struggled academically while others excelled in the classroom at the high school level (Wiggins, 2010).

This historical legacy continues to influence current student-athletes, highlighting ongoing challenges and progress in the pursuit of equity and support in educational and athletic environments. Unequal athletic opportunity structures still exist, rooted in the nurturing and rewarding of an athletic mindset and behaviors often associated with whiteness and affluent dispositions (Hextrum et al., 2024). For example, research highlights that student-athletes often underachieve academically (Noguera, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2014). However, some studies illustrate how students who encounter violence and have limited economic resources in their urban neighborhood and school environments exhibit resilience and strive for academic and



athletic achievement (Adeyemo, 2022). Educational practitioners should create space for BIPOC student-athletes to share their stories and experiences. Doing so strengthens their voices, brings awareness, challenges stereotypes, and contributes to scholarship and policy (Agyemang, 2010). That is one of the hopes of this study—to allow BIPOC student-athletes to tell their own stories.

Race has been a factor not only in high school sports but in professional sports around the world. Sport is often mentioned in passing in research regarding race, particularly in reference to celebrity athletes such as Mike Tyson, Serena Williams, Jeremy Lin, or Tiger Woods. It was once rare for sports to be the subject of rigorous and systematic analysis or to be used as a starting point for deeper examination (Carrington, 2013). However, research exploring race and athletics is now more common. Peer-reviewed journals such as the *Sociology of Sport Journal*, the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, and the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* regularly publish articles addressing race and sport (Carrington, 2013).

### **Student-Athlete Experiences**

#### ***Racial Experiences***

High school athletics are great places for student-athletes to have experiences that will aid them for a lifetime. Participation can offer mental and physical health benefits, improved student retention and graduation rates, the development of positive social behaviors, résumé building opportunities, and enhanced social status (Hextrum et al., 2024). For BIPOC student-athletes however, the equation is more complex. Prior research suggest BIPOC student-athletes question their belonging in school and sport (Higginbotham, 2021), while others view sport as a means to provide economic mobility (Adeyemo, 2022). Many do not have a safety net to fall back on if they fail at achieving their athletic goals (Park et al., 2019).

Past research shows a clear correlation between lower family income and decreased adolescent participation in sports. This trend disproportionately affects youth of color, who often come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, making youth sports less accessible to them. According to Black et al. (2022), children from low-income families face significant barriers to participating in sports, including cost and lack of resources—challenges that are more prevalent in minority communities. White children (60.4%) were more likely to participate in sports compared to Black (42.1%), Hispanic (46.9%), and Asian (51.4%) children (Black et al., 2022). Athletics can play a crucial role in shaping the identities of youth of color, providing a sense of belonging and pride. However, these athletes may face discrimination and inequality within sports systems, including biased coaching decisions, unequal access to resources, and racism from peers, coaches, and officials (Mala et al., 2020). Mental health professionals should be aware of the significant mental health needs of minority student-athletes, particularly given their low utilization of mental health services (Ballesteros & Tran, 2020).

A study exploring the experiences of Black student-athletes found that academic trends associated with Black male student-athletes are less reflective of individual effort or academic motivation and more so a result of systemic inequalities and the devaluation of preparing Black student-athletes for success beyond sports (Cooper, 2016). Not all students share the same educational experiences, and race remains a major factor shaping those experiences. Discrimination in specific regions, along with stereotypes held by educational administrators, professors, and peers, may contribute to inaccurate perceptions of Black students' mental health and academic needs (Tran et al., 2021). These findings emphasize how systemic inequalities and racial discrimination influence both the athletic and personal experiences of Black student-athletes.

Latino male student-athletes may also face negative experiences based on their racial and athletic identities. Such experiences include racial remarks, peer stigmas, and cultural obligations; and have been shown to negatively impact their athletic experiences (Ortega, 2019). All the Latino student-athletes in the Ortega (2019) study were aware of the racism currently existing in athletics and accepted that there was no way for them to change that as an individual. These findings underscore the pervasive nature of racism in high school athletics and the significant impact it has on the experiences and identities of Latino male student-athletes.

Within the context of private schools, cost of tuition has led to a predominantly white student population that is more segregated than public schools (Thomas et al., 2022). Since these institutions in some states can recruit to their school, predominantly white, private Catholic high schools seek out promising student-athletes who are mostly Black male student-athletes (Thomas et al., 2022). These student-athletes encountered different forms of antiblackness at these institutions, facing frequent structural and cultural assaults that created significant barriers to their daily participation in school life. These challenges included discriminatory academic policies, racial stereotyping by faculty and peers, and a lack of institutional support, all of which contributed to their marginalization (Thomas et al., 2022).

### ***Balancing Academics and Athletics***

Student-athletes have a unique experience compared to their non-athlete peers. In addition to attending all their classes and maintaining good grades, they must also focus on athletic performance, attend practices and games—often scheduled after school, early in the morning, or requiring travel. They must also prepare to become productive citizens by developing academic, social, and psychosocial skills (Shifrer et al., 2015). Balancing academics and athletics in the modern world is increasingly difficult (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015), and the

overall experience can influence student-athletes' development positively or negatively, depending on their journey and outcomes (Niehues et al., 2022). High school students who participate in athletics are also more likely to attend college than their nonathlete peers (Shifrer et al., 2015). The number of women athletes pursuing higher education has steadily increased, partly due to Title IX (Shifrer et al., 2015). While this progress is notable, it's also essential to examine whether high school athletics still serves as a meaningful educational and recreational resource for BIPOC student-athletes. Balancing academics and athletics is especially critical for those seeking collegiate athletic scholarships. High school sports have been linked to higher educational attainment overall over the past three decades. However, this benefit has not extended equally as Black female student-athletes have not experienced the same increase in college enrollment as their peers (Shifrer et al., 2015).

The identities of male Black student-athlete is often talked in school settings because of the two roles, being a student and athlete and how they relate. However, these roles often lead to differing experiences (Noguera, 2008). For example, Black male students are stereotyped by their peers and others within the community as being less academically motivated compared to their Black female and White peers (Higginbotham, 2021). The risk of being perceived as a “brainiac” is found to be a particular threat to Black male students' reputation and status as “cool” (Roberts-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2013). BIPOC student-athletes identify more closely with athletics than academics, which may impact their academic performance, for example, their high school GPA (Higginbotham, 2021). These studies highlight the complex challenges that BIPOC student-athletes, especially Black males, face when trying to find a way to balance their academic and athletic identities, which can often result in adverse effects on their academic performance and social standing.

## **Psychology of BIPOC Student-Athlete**

### ***Mental Health of BIPOC Student-Athletes***

While high school athletics offer many benefits, they can also negatively impact mental health. Athletic administrators often emphasize the physical benefits of sports but need to address the mental health challenges student-athletes face (Ryan et al., 2018). Student-athletes are increasingly experiencing anxiety, depression, bipolar episodes, substance abuse, and eating disorders (Ryan et al., 2018). These issues highlight the need for greater attention to the mental health aspects of student-athlete experiences.

Recently, high school sports have evolved from recreational activities to competitive participation at the highest levels (Varghese et al., 2021). Several theoretical models guide young athletes' training to optimize performance, each with their strengths and weaknesses. For instance, the National Youth Sports Strategy (NYSS) framework emphasizes equity, inclusion, physical literacy, and opportunities for sports sampling (Varghese et al., 2021). One of the main components of this movement is focused on well-being within youth sports (NYSS, 2019).

The demands on student-athletes in elite high school sports can negatively affect mental health (Lundqvist et al., 2023). Many college freshmen report that when they were high school seniors, they felt overwhelmed, which can lead to anxiety or depression (Ryan et al., 2018). This time commitment can hinder the time that student-athletes have when trying to utilize support services. Another factor contributing to the underutilization of support services is the stigma that student-athletes should be able to “push through” and “fix it on their own,” or that seeking care is a “sign of weakness,” particularly among male student-athletes (Egan, 2019).

Modern medical practices focus on preventing and treating teenage issues such as substance misuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety (Vella et al., 2017). These mental

health challenges have significant negative impacts on young people and society. High school sports programs should be designed to positively influence participants' mental health and appeal to those with poor psychosocial health (Vella et al., 2017). These articles highlight the need for modern medicine and support services when addressing mental health challenges in the context of high school sports programs.

Depression, a debilitating condition, affects family, athletics, and academics (Weigand et al., 2013). More education, screening, intervention, and awareness are needed to address depression in athletes after their sports careers end, as many use athletics as their identity, especially at the high school level (Weigand et al., 2013). The high stress from balancing athletics and academics contributes to these issues. Other contributing factors include family conflicts, lack of coping mechanisms, and early substance use and experimentation (Ryan et al., 2018). Addressing these issues requires reducing stigma and ensuring access to licensed mental health professionals (Egan, 2019).

Although most studies show that student-athletes suffer from mental health disorders at rates similar to their non-athlete peers (Kegelaers et al., 2022), good mental health is essential for optimal performance in both academics and sports. Identifying and managing the pressure on high school athletes can help mitigate these issues. The goal of athletic programs is to ensure that high school athletics positively impact student-athletes without causing additional problems in the immediate or long-term future (Thompson et al., 2023). Striking this mental and physical balance would be vital for ensuring that student-athletes benefit as a whole person from their participation in high school sports.

### ***COVID-19 Impact***

This study is taking place in a world that is after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is another factor that has affected student-athletes since the first lockdown (Gazmararian et al., 2023; Murdock et al., 2023; Windarwati et al., 2022; Labuhn et al., 2021; Gambau et al., 2022). One of the largest impacts on student-athletes from the pandemic is seen in mental health. The negative effect on adolescent mental health was found due to school closures, isolation, family loss/hardships, and reduced healthcare access (Murdock et al., 2023). High school students have an increased risk of experiencing mental health problems, specifically psychological distress, worry, loneliness, anxiety, depression, traumatic symptoms, and other psychological disorders such as eating disorders, suicide risk, sleep disorders, and psychosocial functioning (Windarwati, 2021). That is a long list of mental health issues that could exist for this population. Taking into account the stress of the physical disease itself and the risk of contracting it, it is hard to imagine what these populations were going through. Another factor within this is access to healthcare—it was known before the pandemic that there were racial disparities in access to healthcare and health status (Yearby, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected student-athletes, particularly in terms of their mental health. This accentuates the need for targeted interventions to support the mental health of student-athletes in the post-pandemic world.

### ***Social and Racial Identity Development***

In America, there are eight million high school athletes who participate in national federations, and these federations make it clear in their mission statements that these athletes benefit from participating in sports (Camiré, 2014). The evidence shows that these national federations and sports leagues are not contributing to the development of their student-athletes

directly—for example, leading workshops or setting forth programs to help development. Much of the development comes from the coaches who are actively being mentors or role models within the student-athletes' lives (Camiré, 2014). Camiré (2014) states that adults within sports rarely communicate and work together to support student-athlete development. This can be between multiple coaches in a single sport or coaches in the same school who coach similar student-athletes. The lack of collaboration can hinder the social identity development of athletes, particularly in diverse environments where understanding and addressing racial identity can be complex (Camiré, 2014).

BIPOC students often contend with the idea that liking or identifying with sports is important to be a part of their culture and that liking or identifying with school can threaten a sense of connection to others within their racial background (Higginbotham, 2021). The emphasis on athletic accomplishments by institutions, such as high schools, the media, and colleges, sends powerful messages reinforcing certain social and racial identities, suggesting that athletic success is a more viable path to recognition and success for student-athletes than academic achievement (Adeyemo & Morris, 2020).

The sports landscape today is perhaps more competitive than ever. One result is that high school sports programs support athletes as they progress to the Olympic and professional levels that have become more intense and professionalized (Thompson et al., 2022). The quality of the organization that the student-athlete is participating in can affect their development negatively or positively (Kim et al., 2020). Student-athletes who participate in high school athletic programs benefit from far more academic and athletic resources, spend more time training and competing, and have higher-level training partners. This can positively affect their development as human beings or negatively impact their development, depending on the person. One example of this



was a group of soccer players who were focusing on school to try to maintain good grades but when it came to the soccer field, they felt like they were inadequately prepared physically (Thompson et al., 2022). The coaching style of the coach plays a role in the emphasis on the classroom or the on-field. If the coach emphasizes the classroom, the students will listen to these remarks and be better students. Some coaches do not focus on classroom development and only care about the physical (Thompson et al., 2022). Statistically, the classroom will take more students farther in life than on-the-field capabilities. Furthermore, coaches and sports programs that recognize and embrace the racial and social identities of their athletes can foster an inclusive environment that promotes the overall development of student-athletes (Higginbotham, 2021).

### ***Support Services***

High school students get support from a variety of different places, from friends to parents, to coaches, to licensed professionals, to medical doctors, and to many other individuals around them who are trained and who are not (Thompson, 2023). This support can differ from person to person based on their own needs and wants but many times this is stigmatized for BIPOC student-athletes (Harris, 2021). For example, factors that affect this support level are the perception of mental health services, their village of support, and prior experiences with mental health services (Harris, 2021). Thompson et al., (2023) state that flexible development programs, individualized student-athlete support, and student-athlete monitoring should be essential features required of schools with sports programs. Recognizing the support needs of high school BIPOC student-athletes is crucial for promoting their overall well-being and success in academics and sports.

### **Summary / Purpose of Literature Review**

This literature review explores the varied dynamics of race in high school athletics, focusing on how systemic inequalities in the education system and racial discrimination within the United States shape the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes. By examining the historical context of race in sports from *Brown v. The Board of Education* to now. Also, examining the educational and athletic experiences of student-athletes, and the impact of social and racial identity development. This review aims to highlight the ongoing challenges and progress in achieving equity in educational and athletic environments. The review also addresses the psychological needs of BIPOC high school student-athletes, emphasizing the importance of targeted support services and inclusive sporting programs. This includes considering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on BIPOC student-athletes' mental health. Also, the important role of support systems in influencing BIPOC student-athletes mental health. The ultimate goal of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing BIPOC student-athletes and to advocate for systemic changes that enhance their development and enjoyment in both academics and athletics.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS**

### **Research Paradigm and Design**

An explanatory case study was used to describe the experiences of the participants in a small case size (Creswell, 2017). This method is used to give an explanation of how or why a phenomenon or event is happening, in this case, how are student-athletes affected by racial pressures (Fisher & Ziviani, 2004). There was a smaller sample size used in the study that helps to understand the psyche of these student-athletes at a more in-depth level than a large quantitative study. Then, the information helps tell researchers and athletic administrators if there are any supports in place, how to help this population, or if the help is already present. This qualitative methods approach assists in understanding the racial pressures that student-athletes face.

Explanatory case studies work well to help explain the experiences of the participants and have been used in studies that involve sports and student-athletes (Santomier et al., 2023; Scamardella, 2021). For example, Agyemang et al. (2010) focused on the perception of race for Black student-athletes. Findings of that study indicated race and knowledge about activism are important issues in American society and sports. More importantly than the findings, the researchers gave a voice to the student-athletes to be able to talk about their experiences to gain further insights. Lucas et al. (2018) described the importance of explanatory case studies in research. The authors state that they can provide answers to a variety of research contexts and enable a flexible approach to address a wide range of research questions. Case studies are used to see how people interact with the world. In this specific case, the participants are being examined for their interactions with the specific pressures to draw focus on this population (Locke et al., 2014).

## Study Context

This study took place in a city in the Southwest United States and included student-athletes who are juniors from one private high school in the area. The other population that was a part of the study was high school coaches and parents of BIPOC student-athletes at the same private high school. The parents who are in the study will be identified as parent participants. The demographic population of this city is racially diverse, and this is one reason why this area of the United States is a good area for this research. According to the US Census (2022), no one race, or ethnicity of individuals holds a 50% or higher majority in the area. The area where the student-athletes attend high school are all located within the same city. The school competes in the state association for athletics, meaning that they are eligible to compete against other schools and are eligible for state championships and recruitment for athletics. The population of the school is approximately 250 students in total.

Another factor within the study is that the school is a private high school. Private high school students typically are fewer in number but perform better and have better educational outcomes than their public school counterparts (Pierce & Claybourn, 2023). Private schools cost tuition money, while public high schools do not charge a price to attend. The private school in the study does offer tuition assistance to attend, but all students pay to attend this school. This is important to this study because student-athletes who come from privileged backgrounds were more than three times as likely to be college athletes as those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Tompsett & Knoester, 2022).

Another part of this study is the economic factor in attaining an athletic scholarship. Not every person can afford to attend college due to the rising costs of tuition, which is the reason why student loans have doubled in the past two decades and are at a balance of \$1.645 trillion for

federal student loans (Hanson, 2023). The impact this has on athletic scholarships is that more student-athletes are vying for these scholarships to attend college at a lower cost. If students are unable to attain these scholarships, they may not be able to attend college because of the rising costs and economic state of the world (Hanson, 2023).

### **Study Participants**

The study intended to recruit up to ten sophomore, junior, and senior high school BIPOC student-athletes who are actively participating in high school athletics to join the research study. The original number of ten participants was selected to ensure a comprehensive set of data. These student-athletes can participate in any sport and be any gender. After the recruitment and sampling process, three high school BIPOC student-athletes participated in the study, all of which were juniors.

This study also intended to recruit up to five high school coaches and up to five parent participants of BIPOC student-athletes, also due to ensuring a comprehensive set of data. These participants could coach or be a parent in any sport and also be any gender. The reason for interviewing this population is that coaches can provide insights into the institutional racial pressures and systemic policies that student-athletes encounter. Parents can offer a broader view of how these pressures manifest across different venues of a student's life. After the recruitment and sampling process, four high school coaches and three parent participants were included in the study.

A single research site was chosen for this study. The reasons for including a single high school in this study was to provide deep, context-rich data and due to the convenience that the researcher worked at this institution before. This school also experienced the tragic loss of a former BIPOC student-athlete, who graduated and went on to play college sports, and then sadly

took their own life, which is discussed in the introduction. This loss has profoundly impacted the community, highlighting the need for a better understanding of the pressures faced by BIPOC student-athletes. This approach allows for a thorough exploration of the experiences of student-athletes who participate in athletics in that environment. It also provides insight from the adults in their lives, including parents and coaches. These populations do not experience everything that student-athletes experience but can help confirm the experiences of student-athletes through their insights.

The type of sampling strategy that was utilized is purposive sampling, where the researcher purposely seeks out specific individuals to participate in the interview and study process (Campbell et al., 2020). This type of sampling strategy is best suited for this study because it is used to select respondents who are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information (Kelly, 2010). The strengths of purposive sampling are the time efficiency, having a focus on specific characteristics, and enhanced data quality (Patton, 2015). The weaknesses of purposive sampling are limited generalizability to the broader population, a dependence on the researcher's expertise, and the potential for bias (Patton, 2015). There were three student-athlete participants in the study, and all of them self-identified as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color. The reason for this is that the study wants to understand the specific pressures that this group of student-athletes may face. That is why it is important to have this purposive sampling because the researcher can select individuals who would be good participants for the study and yield the most appropriate and useful information.

The participants were recruited through networking and using local resources of athletic directors and local coaches. A flyer and e-mail was created to reach out to the athletic director from the high school. Then the athletic director reached out to their school's student-athletes,

parent participants, and coaches who filled out a short questionnaire with variables of interest (Campbell et al., 2020). The email and flyer had a link to fill out the short questionnaire with variables of interest to be chosen for the study. The participation criteria for student-athletes had three standards that must all be met. The first criterion was that they must be sophomores, juniors, or seniors in high school. The second criterion was that they must participate in athletics at their school. The third criterion was for purposive sampling and that is the student-athlete must self-identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color. After the athletic director sent out the short questionnaire with variables of interest, the researcher examined the responses and was able to select possible participants based on the questionnaire. The researcher identified possible participants and contacted the student-athletes that they have been selected for the study.

The criteria for coaches to be interviewed was, first they must be an athletic coach at this high school. Second, they must have been a coach at the institution for a minimum of 3 years. Lastly, they must have been a varsity or junior varsity coach in their careers. The criterion for parent participants was, first they must be a parent of a BIPOC student-athlete who is attending this school. Lastly, they had to have played athletics themselves in high school, no matter the level.

Since the student-athletes are minors, the participants completed an adolescent assent form to be able to participate in the study. Their guardians completed a parental consent form for their children to be a part of the study. The parent participants and coaches completed a consent form for participation in the study. These documents were turned in virtually. Then, the documents have been stored on a password-protected drive on the researcher's personal computer. Then, after the assent and consent forms were completed, the researcher emailed the guardians, student-athletes, the coaches participating, and the parents participating to schedule a

preliminary conversation to help the interviewer and the interviewee make a personal connection, manage their respective expectations, and facilitate open dialogue.

### ***Participant Demographics and Profiles***

All 10 participants were labeled with the pseudo names that will be listed below. The participants play and coach in a variety of sports. The sports involved for the student-athletes and their parents were soccer, basketball, water polo, swimming, volleyball, and track and field. The sports coached by the high school coaches were volleyball, basketball, pickleball, cross country, and track and field. The data gathered was coded based on similar responses that aligned to themes from participants in the interviews.

#### **Individual Participant Pseudo Name List**

- Student-Athlete 1: Emma
- Student-Athlete 2: Sophie
- Student-Athlete 3: Ava
- Coach 1: Mia
- Coach 2: Chandler
- Coach 3: Olivia
- Coach 4: Grace
- Parent 1: Charlotte
- Parent 2: Patrick
- Parent 3: Ella



**Table 1.**

## Participant Information

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Sport(s) Played, Coached, or Parent In</b>	<b>Race of Participant</b>	<b>Participant Category</b>
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Soccer, Basketball, T&F	Black or African American	Student-Athlete
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Water Polo, Swimming	Native American or Alaska Native	Student-Athlete
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Volleyball, T&F	Black or African American	Student-Athlete
Female	Varsity	Volleyball (girls and boys)	Asian or Pacific Islander	Coach
Male	Varsity	Basketball	Black or African American	Coach
Female	Varsity	Volleyball	White	Coach
Female	Varsity	Pickleball, Cross Country, T&F	Asian or Pacific Islander	Coach
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Soccer, Basketball, T&F	Hispanic	Parent
Male	8 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup>	BMX, Basketball, Football, Mountain Biking	Black or African American	Parent
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Volleyball, T&F	Black or African American	Parent

### **Positionality**

I am a doctoral student at the University of Arizona studying educational leadership. I am male in gender and Hispanic in ethnicity. My role as the researcher is that I am an athletic trainer at a public high school with a population of 2,400 students. I am also a former employee at this institution. I was employed at this institution for three years before the study took place. I also did know most of the participants beforehand and had established a relationship as a healthcare provider at this institution. I also am a former high school student-athlete. For me being a former student-athlete and current athletic administrator, understanding the pressures of sports is a crucial topic. This is because of the importance this could have for student-athletes who want to pursue a future in sports. This had an impact on me as a high school student-athlete because I realized that I did not need to feel this pressure, as sports are games or events to be enjoyed. This realization has influenced my current work to be in athletic administration and share my experiences with others (Bukamal, 2022). The impact of sports has been an important part of my life, and I feel as though this impact is just as significant for many others. The limitation for myself within this study is that I am around student-athletes daily for my job and see the lows and highs that student-athletes go through. The way I will navigate this limitation is to document that this inside look at working in high school athletics may influence observations and interpretations. I will also navigate being a former employee following all IRB approval and creating a strong methods section to guide the process. I was able to gain access to the participants from my network that I have made from working in high school athletics in multiple states. I also worked to differentiate my experiences and those of the participants by critically examining my positionality and prioritizing participant voices to ensure they remained the central focus of the analysis.

### **Data Collection**

This explanatory case study (Fisher & Ziviani, 2004) utilized semi-structured interviews with three student-athlete participants who met the standard criteria of the study and have parental consent to be in the study. There was also semi-structured interviews for the coaches and parent participants who met the criteria and consented to the study. Before the semi-structured interviews for the study, there will be a preliminary conversation. This helped the researcher and the participants meet each other and helped the interviewer and the interviewee make a connection, set expectations, and start a dialogue. The guardians were invited to these conversations, and they lasted 15-30 minutes. These conversations were held over Zoom. The main semi-structured interviews were scheduled with the participants at the end of this conversation. The interview protocol was reviewed and approved beforehand by the University of Arizona IRB and chair of the dissertation committee.

Before the interviews began the researcher let the participants know that they are a mandatory reporter. This means that if we learn or suspect that a student-athlete is being abused or neglected, this will be reported to the authorities. This also includes self-harm. This would include a report to authorities such as child protective services, school authorities, or other relevant agencies. No matter if this comes up or not within the interview, resources will be made available for the student after the interview, such as counseling services, hotlines, and other support services. These resources were given to the participants on a sheet of paper or through email.

The research interviews were 30-45 minutes each and conducted one-on-one with the researcher and the participant. The setting for these interviews was online through a Zoom meeting or at the school of the research in a semi-formal space, such as a meeting room

(McGrath et al., 2018). This depended on the availability of the participants and what the preferences were for them; parents were invited to the interview site but not allowed to be present during the interview. For the Zoom interviews, the parents were not allowed to be a part of the research interview. The reason for this is to help improve the competence of the subject and avoid parental gatekeeping that can come with interviewing younger individuals. (Kutrovátz, 2017). The discussion followed the interview protocol (McGrath et al., 2018). This does not mean that the interviewer did not go off the guide to clarify or probe for more information about a topic discussed, as this is a semi-structured interview. Responses were elicited by the researcher by the questions asked, re-articulation, and recall of the questions and experiences had by the participants (Clark et al., 2020). For the coaches and parent participant interviews, there were no other individuals invited to these interviews besides the participants themselves.

The interviews were recorded with an audio and visual component. The in-person interviews were recorded using the Apple Voice Memos app and a handheld recorder. They were recorded visually using a computer and Zoom software. The online interviews will only be recorded using Zoom software, and the audio recording will be done using the Apple Voice Memos app. After recording, the files were transcribed to text using Microsoft Word's dictate function. This function is not 100% accurate and will need to be edited after the original speech-to-text while listening to the audio. Those transcripts will be uploaded to Dedoose so that the audio can be transcribed. These recordings and transcripts were stored on the recording device, Dedoose, a personal laptop with a password-protected drive, and a personal desktop with a password-protected drive. This aided in collecting the interviews and the eventual coding and analyzing of the data. The recordings are crucial for the study because the researcher can go back and listen to the interviews to help remember any statements that will help to create themes.

The researcher also took field notes during participant interviews (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). The notes are important to note any non-verbal or even verbal parts of the interview that a recorder cannot generate. These observation notes are an important part of the interview process because they enable the researcher to compare the codes and themes from the observation with findings from the interviews (Creswell, 2021). These notes were taken when conducting in-person and Zoom interviews. They are another important part of having one-on-one interviews with ten study participants. The type of information that was written are descriptive notes, such as sub-questions to ask based on answers, and reflective notes for highlights or potential themes. There are limitations to field note collection because the presence of the researcher can cause bias, not all people can articulate their thoughts, and the location of the interview can impact the results (Creswell, 2017).

### **Data Analysis**

The process of analyzing the data from the interviews was done in a 3-step coding process after the transcription process. The transcription process involved getting all of the interviews into a Word Document. This was done by first receiving the Zoom transcript that was taken by the Zoom software. This transcript was then copy and pasted onto a document. After this I reviewed the interviews by listening to the recording and went through the transcription and edited it for accuracy and clarity. The transcripts were separated by each individual participants and each interview was separated between the participant talking and the researcher talking. Once these were finalized the coding process began. The first step was open coding, the second step was axial coding, and the final step was selective coding (Saldaña, 2021). In step one, each transcript was open coded from the initial transcripts to build a sense of the data and develop initial codes (Saldaña, 2021). Each transcript was read at least three times to start the

participant-driven codebook representative of all ten transcripts. In step two, axial coding was utilized to examine the open codes and then combine them to form more specific and organized categories. In the third and final step, selective coding was used to make themes from the axial codes. At this point the four themes for the study were created. The themes characterize perceptions or experiences that the researcher sees as relevant to the research question (Miles et al., 2020). This process from start to finish was fluid, and the transcripts were analyzed multiple times until the final themes are made. The themes that emerged from the interviews are the endpoint of the coding process and where results are taken from for the results and discussion sections (Creswell, 2017).

### **Validity**

The validity of a study is an important measure that needs to be assessed by the researcher before, during, and after the study is completed. Validity is defined as the extent to which the study measures what it is intended to (Carmines & Zeller, 2013). The strategies used to help bring validity to the study will be methods-based triangulation and to clarify the bias. Methods-based triangulation was done by collecting three different types of data: including interviews, observations, and field notes (Creswell, 2017). Collecting these three types of data helped to focus on the themes that will be created and characterize experiences that relate to the research question. Clarifying the bias was done by explaining the limitations of the research, taking field notes, and being honest about the bias that the researcher has. An example of this is taking notes of biases that may occur during the interview and the coding process. The positionality statement that is stated in the paragraphs above will help clarify the biases that may exist as the researcher.

### **Reliability**

The reliability of a study is also a critical component to show and prove; reliability is defined as the consistency of a study (Creswell, 2017). This is true no matter how many or how few researchers are present within a study because the methods and data that are gathered need to be consistent and accurate the whole time. There is only one researcher within this study, but it is still important to have standards when sorting and collecting the data. One reliability method that was used is a codebook. The codebook is a technique to use so that the coding process can be consistent and constantly compared and not drift in the defining of codes (Creswell, 2017). The guidelines for the codebook and coding process are to have only one coder, code one transcript at a time, relate codes to research questions, track codes in the codebook, avoid similarities, take note of negative and positive within the data, maintain accurate transcripts, and organize after each round of coding. Lastly, another strategy used to enhance reliability was going through the transcripts three times. This will be verified to make sure that the interviews were transcribed correctly; this helps to ensure the themes and findings are accurate.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Overview

The following chapter describes the two main research questions, the results of the three data collection groupings, and the findings of this qualitative explanatory interview-based case study. The accepted themes of the interview groups of student-athletes, coaches, and parents are all combined and aligned to answer the two main research questions:

RQ1: How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?

RQ2: What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color and improve their overall educational experiences?

Overall, this study sought to explore the lived experiences of BIPOC high school student-athletes and the systemic and individual supports that can improve their overall educational and athletic experiences. This was done through their own voices and other voices, such as coaches and parents, who were used to help tell their story and confirm this. Data collection for the student-athletes, coaches, and parents that were interviewed resulted in four major themes, outlined in subheadings below. Following Saldaña's (2021) three-step coding process, a participant-driven codebook was created. This codebook consists of four themes. The themes characterize perceptions or experiences that the researcher sees as relevant to the research question (Miles et al., 2020). These four themes are based on the two main research questions and the interview data collected from the high school student-athletes, coaches, and parents interviewed. From the individual interviews and non-participant observation transcripts, initial coding was completed expressing 460 initial codes with 227 minutes of data. Codes were then grouped into categories and themes and revised to create the four accepted themes.



The findings are organized into four overall themes that emerged across student-athletes, coaches, and parents. Those themes are systemic factors related to institutional experiences and racial representation, social and psychological factors that influence coping and self-efficacy, the role of support systems in fostering inclusion, and future strategies for advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity in athletics. Each of the themes will be discussed further in the following sections. Quotes and experiences will be highlighted throughout the results section from the student-athletes, coaches, and parent participants.

The participants in this study identified challenges in multiple aspects of their athletic and school experiences. The participants also identified admirations in their athletic and school experiences at this private school institution. The area that the participants spoke about the most was about the school as a whole and their experience with others at the institution. All of the student athlete participants provided examples of how race affects their everyday lives in not only the school but in the athletic setting. There were not any major hostile examples that the students gave but there were still microaggressions talked about by the participants. An example of that is one of the student athletes talked about how some of their peers use the N-word when they are singing lyrics to music or being called “monkeys” by opposing teams during an athletic competition.

Another majorly discussed topic by the participants was about education of racial issues and experiences. Nearly every single participant in the study advocated for some more trainings, events, or educational discussions on race at the institution. Some of them stated that these types of events do happen but tend to be forgotten about or only talked about at one certain time and are not followed through.

One of the most positively talked about topics for the participants was the mention of affinity groups. Affinity groups are school-sponsored groups that help to provide a space for students who share a common identity, such as race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. In these groups, students are encouraged to connect, support each other, and discuss issues relevant to their experiences. All of the student-athlete participants in this study participated in a racial-led affinity group at their institution.

### **Systemic Factors: Institutional Experiences and Racial Representation in Athletics**

One of the findings of this study was the role of racial identity and systemic structures in shaping the experiences of high school student-athletes of color. Participants across all groups—student-athletes, coaches, and parents—described how race influenced the opportunities, perceptions, and experiences of BIPOC student-athletes within high school athletics.

The findings of this study are impacted by the central tenets of Critical Race Theory, which were discussed in Chapter 2. In alignment with CRT, this research aimed to explore whether and how systemic inequities manifest, particularly in private school environments. The tenet of CRT of counter-storytelling was a recurring lens in the study (Ladson-Billings, 2015). Through the voices of student-athletes, coaches, and parents, this study surfaces stories that can be excluded from discussions about high school athletics, including a Black student-athlete participant, Sophie, who talked about racial slurs being used around them.

Like, it's not that it's not that big of a deal, but it's like there are a lot of students on campus that think it's like, still okay to say like the n-word during like a song or something.

These counter-stories reveal how systemic racism, and institutional barriers shape the daily realities of BIPOC student-athletes, from experiencing microaggressions and racial slurs to

being funneled into sports based on stereotypes. One participant recounted being encouraged or pressured to play sports that aligned with those racial stereotypes. Sophie, a student-athlete, shared this, “In basketball, it was kind of a lot different. People would be like, you’re like super tall and like, obviously like Black people play basketball. So, it was kind of like everybody just encouraged me to do it.”

By sharing their truths, participants disrupt the prevailing assumption that high school athletics are racially neutral spaces. The stories shared offer insights into how race and representation influence access and opportunity at this institution. Chandler, a coach, talked about the lived experiences of student-athletes around him, “They finally tell us that the kids on the court and the kids and the people in the stands were calling them n\*\*\*\*r, they’re calling them monkeys.” These are painful experiences that a coach talks through to expose the presence of racial hostility but also highlight the emotional toll it takes on student-athletes. Chandler, followed up with this statement:

It took a good three to four weeks and getting those kids into counseling and stuff and seeing the on school counselor and a couple of them had to go to individual counselors, uh, to start to rebuild their confidence and get that back up after that incident.

While these counter-stories highlight individual experiences, they also point to institutional patterns in the broader community that reinforce racial inequities within high school athletics.

The participants frequently spoke about the importance of racial representation among coaches, leadership, and peers as a barrier to creating inclusive athletic environments. One student-athlete, Emma, spoke about how a lack of racial representation in their sport and team can cause others to quit the sport:

I've seen a lot of people at my club that have been people of color and have quit within the first two weeks maybe. Potentially. I don't know because I don't talk to them as much outside, but potentially because there's just no one else there that looks like them.

Another student-athlete, Sophie, discusses how having people of color on their team makes them feel better, "There are like people on my team that are people of color, which is really nice. Um, it doesn't feel like you're so alone." Both of these experiences show the need for student-athletes to be around those that they feel comfortable with, which can be someone who is of the same race as them.

Student-athletes described how racial biases, such as stereotypes that paint them as being less capable than their White counterparts, influenced their interactions with coaches and teammates. Some reported feeling as though they or their parents had to work harder than others to receive the same recognition or opportunities as their White peers. One coach, Chandler, discussed having less chances to fail:

Understand that sometimes those kids are afraid of every possible mistake that they make and get them kicked out of a school like this. That they know that that kid over there can make a ton of mistakes. That kid over there can fail a couple of tests and still make it up and be fine because that kid over there, that parent is on the board of this school. So, they're gonna get a whole lot of breaks that, that I can't screw up. And in every minority household, Black, Hispanic, Asian or whatever, every parent has told their kids, every parent, and I'm sure you heard it from yours, that you can't afford to make a mistake.

Coaches also acknowledged that racial representation among staff played a critical role in shaping student-athlete experiences. They noted that schools with a predominantly White

coaching staff can lack the cultural awareness necessary to support BIPOC student-athletes fully.

Mia, a coach, emphasized:

I feel like it's really important that they have a coach who is a person of color because that's not really something that I had... at the very least, they know that they like, have like a point of contact... if they need to talk about that kind of thing.

Parents provided insights into microaggressions that parents and their children navigate, a core focus of the Critical Race Theory tenet the belief that racism is normal. Charlotte reflected on the subtle racial biases her child has faced, stating, "It's hard to like read the undertones and I don't wanna assume, but sometimes you get a little dose of like, well, was that because you're making an assumption based on race?"

It has been shown that if there are mentorship programs in place for BIPOC student-athletes, they will be more successful than their counterparts who do not have a mentor (Bimper, 2017). Mentors should be racially diverse at institutions; the reason is that the mentors of different races can understand stereotypes and effects that BIPOC student-athletes go through. Through this they can help the student-athletes navigate these issues and obtain their voice (Griffith et al., 2017; Bimper, 2017). One coach Olivia, described why having a mentor who resembles the student-athlete population is important her:

I definitely think they need some sort of network of role models and mentors. Like, I think mentors in any, any sport, academics, club, those things where they can see themselves. But having a mentor that does resemble you, it doesn't mean you have to walk the same walk or come from the same part of town or all those things. But just having someone that you feel like you can relate to who is like you.

Another component of an institution and the barriers that may be in place is the leadership support at the school. Coach participants talked about how leadership plays a significant role in how BIPOC student-athletes are viewed. If the institution and leadership support athletics and BIPOC student-athletes, that will trickle down to the staff and students. The school's commitment to diversity and inclusion significantly impacts the overall culture of athletics. In the case of this institution, the leadership is supportive of athletics and that trickles down to the student body and staff. A coach, Chandler, describes the lack of negative experiences because of leadership:

I asked my son, um, just like, 'cause I wanted him to participate in this with you too. And he's like that I, I don't have any information about race at all. It's like I've never had a negative experience, I've never seen a negative experience. Nobody's ever treated me in a way that made me feel less than I am because of my race. And I tried to go through like all these possible scenarios that he could have just missed that something happened or there was a slight somewhere like, you know, and he was just like, never experienced any of that. And he said, and if I did, I'd know who to go to for help."

I followed up with this statement by asking why? And the coach participant said: "I think definitely leadership changes at the school."

This perspective introduces another counter-narrative within the study. While participants described systemic inequities and harmful racial dynamics in athletics, this experience goes against the narrative of how race at times does not negatively shape a student-athlete experiences. In this case, the absence of racialized harm is itself a counter-story that shows the potential of equitable leadership to create affirming environments for BIPOC student-athletes.

The findings for the first theme show the impact of institutional barriers, racial biases, and representation in shaping the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes. This study suggests that institutional barriers, including racial biases and lack of representation, do exist in this environment. However, it is hard to say that these barriers limit opportunities, reinforce exclusion, and create environments where athletes must navigate additional challenges. The narratives shared by student-athletes, coaches, and parents highlight how race influences the overall culture of high school athletics. The presence of mentorship programs and socially conscious leadership help mitigate these challenges. When institutions prioritize racial representation, they create spaces where all athletes can thrive. Addressing barriers requires a continued commitment to equity and representation to ensure that BIPOC student-athletes have the same opportunities for success as their peers.

### **Social and Psychological Factors: Coping, Mental Health, and Self-Efficacy**

Student-athletes of color described how they deal with their own emotional and psychological toll of navigating athletics and academics at their institution. Two out of the three student-athlete participants reported experiencing microaggressions, implicit biases, and heightened expectations, leading to increased stress and self-doubt. These experiences highlight two core tenets of critical race theory, intersectionality and counter-storytelling. In this theme, these two tenets will be examined through the student-athlete experiences with mental health and their socioeconomic statuses.

No individual stated directly that any racial pressure attributed to any mental health issue such as depression or anxiety directly in these interviews. Most questions and answers discussed how they deal with issues that come up and was not attempting to diagnose any issues.

One of the student-athletes expressed a sense of hyper-awareness regarding how they were perceived by their coaches and peers. When asked "in what ways do you think racial pressures have influenced your pursuit of athletics?" Ava shared how she constantly felt the need to prove herself, "Striving to be better always and just like kind of like just showing up and trying to like just do my best to show that I am capable of like doing what I can, you know what I mean?"

Coaches also recognized the pressure that student-athletes of color faced. When asked, "how effective do you find the current support systems available to student athletes of color at your school?" Mia, a coach, noted that her student-athletes hide struggles because they do not want to use support systems stating, "I do think that kids kind of tend to like hide a lot of the struggles that they go through. I think because they feel like they need to basically be perfect and they're all really, like, at least all, a lot of my kids are super like, perfectionistic."

This type of behavior of trying to achieve perfection is becoming more common, especially in the private school setting with how much weight is placed on having to pay for a school to achieve goals. Private high school students typically are fewer in number but perform better and have better educational outcomes than their public school counterparts (Pierce & Claybourn, 2023). One coach noted the social persuasion through student-athletes of color and how they often feel pressure to be perfect or be like a stereotype. Mentorship can help alleviate these emotional and physiological states by providing reassurance. One coach, Mia, talked about this perfectionist pressure that can be faced due to finances and can become a psychological issue:

I think there's like a lot of pressure not only from the school, but also maybe from parents too, to kind of just be like, you're at this nice private school so you have to, you know,



you have to do well. And I think that maybe they don't... it's not openly expressed that like it is okay to like struggle here. There's a lot of shame associated with it, I feel like. The study again uses the lens of CRT to examine the findings on how the participants talked about systemic barriers and microaggressions through intersectionality. The intersection of race and socioeconomic status was evident in discussions about private school dynamics, where the school contributes to high expectations for student performance. One coach, Emma, shared:

I don't know that I've ever had an approach like I'm gonna coach this kid differently because of their color or their race. I've definitely coached kids differently because of financial background. Like, I've helped them, or I've not made decisions for the team that cost kids money because I knew not every kid could afford it or things like that.”

This reveals how socioeconomic awareness may be more readily acknowledged by some than racial dynamics, pointing to how intersectionality is intertwined in student-athlete experiences. While this coach displays compassion for students from financially challenged backgrounds, the absence of race in a decision-making process reinforces the assertion that dominant groups often ignore the impact of race unless it is paired with more visible socioeconomic disparities. This result also helps contribute to the existing literature on inequalities in high school sports participation by deepening the understanding of how social class and race intersect to influence access in athletics (Hextrum et al., 2024).

Parents showed they had concerns about the mental health challenges their children faced, emphasizing the need for school-based programs that acknowledge the intersection of race, athletics, and mental well-being. Without proper support, these challenges could lead to burnout, disengagement, or loss of motivation. One parent Charlotte, discussed the need:

But I would like to see just like the school, like maybe through, there's a collaboration with counselors and coaches where some of the mental aspects of sports, um, particularly for students who are like pursuing college level athletics, like something to support them in that journey. Um, or even players who are suffering from injury.

There is exploration on how systemic and individual factors influence the self-efficacy of BIPOC student-athletes. One of the core elements of SET, social persuasion, emerged as a factor for the environment that student-athletes participant in. One participant emphasized the importance of having a racially diverse and supportive environment that provided guidance, support, and validation. Emma shared her thoughts on this type of environment in swimming versus her school, "I like to believe like within school we have a really supportive environment like surrounding race, but um, something about swimming is that a lot of people of color don't really like, aren't as interested in it."

When discussing self-efficacy theory, it is important to note the social and physical environment of student athletes. Self-efficacy theory in sport involves how internal behaviors and motivations in sport present for these BIPOC student-athletes. Students should want to participate in sport for their own reasons whether that be for building characteristics, engaging in leadership opportunities, or even planning for their future. When planning for the future student athletes can think forward to collegiate scholarships, where they can continue playing the sport that they enjoy but also get a college education. When asked "how have racial pressures have shaped your student athletes high school experiences and their goals for the future?" One parent participant, Charlotte discusses their thought on their student-athlete's self-efficacy for sport participation through racial pressure:

I think she is rising to like, uh, that level of where she wants to be. She holds herself in that light and holds herself to a higher standard. And I think like through high school play, she's been able to build confidence in like, she is a captain, she's a leader, she is high goal scorer 29 goals on the season last season. Like all of those confidence-building moments in her high school experience have like further reinforced that she wants to play D1 in college.

Two student athletes, Ava and Sophie, both discussed their personal motivations behind sport participation and why they continue to participate:

*Ava:* I would say my goals are to just like genuinely get better at both sports and like create friendships and like learn more about leadership and just like build myself as a person.

*Sophie:* My sporting goals are to play division one soccer in college.

Counter-storytelling was a central feature of this study. By letting BIPOC student-athletes, parents, and coaches use their voices and tell their stories, the study challenges the narratives of colorblindness that can exist in athletics. These personal narratives revealed not only the challenges faced by BIPOC student-athletes but also their strength in navigating systemic inequities. It allows them to share personal experiences that challenge dominant narratives about race in sports. Counter-storytelling allowed participants to highlight how race influences their experiences in ways that are often ignored or denied in sports environments. These findings show the importance of acknowledging race as a critical factor in understanding and addressing inequities in athletics and projecting the voices of BIPOC student-athletes, parents, and coaches through interviews.

The experiences of student-athletes of color show the relationship between coping strategies, mental health, and self-efficacy in high school athletics. The psychological pressures they face—from racial biases to perfectionism—highlight the importance of being aware of psychological and social factors within schools. Coaches, leadership, and student-athletes must work collaboratively to create an environment where student-athletes can thrive and reach their goals. By strengthening increasing awareness of mental health resources and recognizing the role of self-efficacy, schools can help ensure that BIPOC student-athletes strive both on and off the sporting venue of their choice.

### **Support Systems: School, Community, and Advocacy for Equity**

Despite the challenges faced, student-athletes, coaches, and parents highlighted the importance of strong support systems in helping student-athletes navigate their experiences. Coaches, mentors, and family members played a critical role in fostering resilience, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Support systems such as counselors are a mixed topic for this group of participants. Some individuals state that they know where to go and that they feel that their counselors are trustworthy and able to help. Others state concerns about not knowing where to go or that the needs of BIPOC student athletes may not be addressed because counselors are for the general population. Sophie explains her expressed concerns about the lack of knowledge on mental health resources:

Like there are things that you can like go talk to people about for like, for example, like if I'm going through something I'm not really gonna know where to go exactly. Like I could go to like a counselor or something. But I feel like counselor's more like, oh, like an in-

school sort of thing in sports or like after school or like outside of school. And I feel like there isn't exactly a lack of people you can talk to.

However, on the other hand, support systems in the school environment emerged as a vital component of their experiences. Emma described how her school fosters a supportive culture, noting,

We have our lovely school counselors, and then, um, teachers here tend to reach out a lot more than teachers, let's say at a public school. I've noticed because I've heard from my friends who have gone from here to public schools and things like that. Um, our teachers are a lot more supportive and, um, they're less judgmental.

The two contrasting statements highlight the importance of accessible and proactive support from educators and counselors in addressing the unique needs of student-athletes of color. The part that could be improved is the accessibility component because even though some student-athletes may know where to go that does not mean all of them know where to go.

Coaches stressed the importance of advocacy and mentorship in ensuring that student-athletes of color felt supported. Chandler, a coach, described the need for continuous education among staff, "For coaches who are not people of color, you know, educate yourself on the things that the students go through... on racism, on, you know, the things that happen at your school."

Systemic supports are central to the findings, reflecting SET's assertion that social and environmental factors shape self-efficacy. BIPOC student-athletes described how supportive school environments, such as access to counselors and coaches, helped them with their participation in sports. The findings highlight strategies for instilling resilience in BIPOC student-athletes, which aligns with SET's tenets of mastery experiences and social persuasion. Participants shared how involvement in leadership roles, positive reinforcement from coaches,

and opportunities for skill development contributed to their growth and confidence. For example, one student-athlete described how becoming a team captain allowed them to develop both their athletic abilities and their capacity to overcome challenges. These findings suggest that athletic programs should prioritize initiatives that empower student-athletes through skill-building opportunities that help them develop themselves through their lived experiences.

It is important that coaches can be a support system for student-athletes. Even though coaches typically are not trained on specific mental health type topics, they can still be a resource for student athletes in their daily lives. One coach, Mia discussed that they feel that student-athletes are good at recognizing for themselves and talking to coaches about their daily issues that could impact their self-efficacy, she stated the following:

I feel like they're pretty good at noticing that and they'll like typically like come up to you and be like, Hey, like is everything okay? Like, what's going on? Like I noticed that you weren't like, like putting in your "A" game today. And is there anything I can help you with or like anything you wanna tell me about, um, to like help you out?

This finding directly relates to previous literature about the internal conflict that can be present for BIPOC student-athletes and how they can grapple with questions of belonging in both academic and athletic spaces. (Higginbotham, 2021).

It is also important for student-athletes to have peers who can be a support system for them. Being surrounded by peers who share similar experiences allows individuals to openly express their thoughts. Ava discusses how this is important to her:

I feel like making friends who are like people of color always help. I feel like just having like one or two, even if they're not the same race as you, they'll probably somewhat

understand what you're going through if you're going through like something challenging regarding race and like your sport.

Parents show mixed results with the pressure component at the institution, some say that the school does not add additional pressure in regard to race, while other disagree. The study does not generally suggest that interest convergence occurs through leadership at the institution. There is little to no evidence to suggest that institutional support for BIPOC student-athletes is a result of situational interest convergence but rather a genuine commitment to the student-athletes. However, it cannot be said with 100% certainty that this support is an ongoing priority or a situational occurrence. The two contrasting statements are by Patrick and Charlottle, which highlight the uncertainty from parents at the institution:

*Patrick:* "I don't think he (his son) feels any sort of racial pressure when he's playing here."

*Charlotte:* I still think there's like the, that tremendous amount of pressure that's placed on athletes, I think, um, there could be a little more done at the school. Like it's, I don't wanna say it's ineffective, but I think there's always a, the possibility of it being more supportive. *(in regard to support systems in place for BIPOC student-athletes).*

Parents, however, emphasized the role of community networks in providing encouragement and resources for student-athletes. Patrick, a parent, shared, "I think because the school itself has such a strong community, I don't think they feel anything different, um, in the athletic environment."

Participants highlighted the need for school-wide initiatives to promote inclusivity, such as affinity groups to get support from their peers. A student-athlete stated that peer support within affinity groups helps, as they could discuss shared experiences and encourage one

another. The following are statements by one coach, one student-athlete, and a parent on the effectiveness of affinity groups in providing support:

*Mia:* We have affinity groups now. So, um, they're mostly racial. And there's a, there's also I think a neurodivergent affinity group. Um, so I'm actually the facilitator for the Asian Affinity Group. So I think that I have a couple of athletes in my affinity group, and I think that that's like a start.

*Sophie:* I'm the co-president of the Black Affinity Group. Um, and I think that group really does help me, uh, because it's like a space for all of us to talk about, like our different struggles and like half of the people in there are student athletes.

*Sophie:* I think that the Black Affinity Group is really effective and I'm glad that we have different affinity groups. I think it helps a lot of people, um, even though like, they're not necessarily like saying it, but it, it's really helpful like mental health to be like surrounded by like your own people sometimes, especially in like a White school.

*Charlotte:* I do appreciate that there's a Black affinity group that (student-athlete) is part of, and I think that's been a really good start to what, um, can be like a more supportive system for student athletes.

These quotes help to reinforce the emotional and psychological impact and the positive effect on mental health for the student-athletes that affinity groups have. Strong support systems—whether through schools, families, communities, or peers—play a crucial role in the experiences of high school BIPOC student-athletes. While some individuals feel well-supported by counselors, coaches, and affinity groups, others highlight gaps in accessibility. The contrasting perspectives on racial pressures and the effectiveness of institutional support prove there is a need for ongoing dialogue and action. School staff must continue their efforts in



education, mentorship, and support to ensure that all student-athletes feel seen and valued. By building a community-type culture, schools can help student-athletes navigate challenges while promoting well-being in athletics.

### **Future Strategies: Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Athletics**

When discussing ways to create a positive athletic environment, participants identified several key strategies. These included increasing the racial diversity in coaching staff for all sports, implementing mandatory educational training for student-athletes and coaches, building community between the school and all stakeholders, and creating more specific supports for student-athletes of color. All of the strategies talked about were to create a more positive environment and were strategies the participants had seen elsewhere or thought of themselves based on their experiences.

Coaches and parents expressed that hiring more diverse coaching staff that is representative of the student-athlete population would help create a sense of belonging for student-athletes of color. Ella explained:

I think seeing more and more, you know, coaches or other kids' involvement who are like same color as her, like whether it's coaches or those things can go a long ways. You know, more, more and more students of, you know, color if they can be involved in sports, you know, supporting each other... I think that will change the game a little bit.

Racial representation among coaches emerged as a factor in self-efficacy for BIPOC student-athletes, through vicarious experiences. One participant stated that having a coach of the same racial background made them feel more connected to them. Grace stated:

Like if you have like a coach of color, like a coach who's a person of color <laugh>, um, like maybe they can like reach out to you like, 'cause you might feel more connected to them and like, Hey, what's up? Like are you feeling okay about like this, this and this?

Coaches also discussed how they believe it is important to have diverse representation, with one stating that seeing role models who "look like you" can make a difference in motivation. Grace, a coach, also discussed hiring a diverse coaching staff and the impact that has on student-athletes:

I feel like it's really important that they have a coach who is a person of color, because that's not really something that I had... at the very least, they know that they like, have like a point of contact... if they need to talk about that kind of thing.

For coaches who do not identify as a person of color, Chandler who is a Black male coach, has advice for how they can still help the BIPOC student-athletes on their teams, "For coaches who are not people of color, you know, educate yourself on the things that the students go through... on racism, on, you know, the things that happen at your school." The further learning that coaches, other students, and community members can participate in will be discussed in Chapter 5 when giving recommendations for the study.

Nearly all participants in the study called for more open conversations about race within athletic programs and the school in order to help educate all at the institution. Efforts to promote cultural competence, racial awareness, and the development of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in schools and athletic environments were encouraged within this conversation and was a popular discussion topic. However, in the current sociopolitical climate—where DEI efforts are increasingly under scrutiny, politicized, or even banned in some educational settings—these calls for dialogue become even more critical and even forbidden. The tension between the need for open conversations about race and the broader national backlash against

race-conscious policies shows the importance of centering student and community voices. This institution shows ways to accomplish this, one way is that they have daily all school meetings in the morning before school. There has been a wide variety of topics that have been discussed at these meetings, including racial education topics. The following is a quote from each group discussing why they believe racial education of a variety of topics is important:

*Grace (a coach):* Just more education and just getting, you know, getting people of color out there and just speaking, um, to the community. You know. Um, I love, I love that when we have our coach meetings, uh, we do invite other people to come.

*Sophie (a student-athlete):* But I feel like continuing like, um, having racial discussions is good. So just like anytime they can, like once a month or something, just like educating people so they don't really like forget. Um, so like, yeah, something like educational based, but it has to like be continued 'cause you only do it like once a year. It doesn't like matter that much.

*Charlottle (a parent):* I just think more education. Like I appreciate the work that you're doing 'cause I, I think more education needs to be, um, pursued on this about this and just more training in general.

Another topic that was discussed is the community that this institution has built over the years, from leadership and outreach. Patrick, a parent, discussed leadership at the school and their role in building community:

I think it stems from leadership, right? It always stems from leadership and I think they do a good job of trying to, to preach and, um, a community. And I think 'the school' does a good job of promoting that community-type environment.

The study highlights how student-athletes build confidence through leadership roles and personal development with mastery experiences. However, some participants reported that BIPOC student-athletes must work harder to receive the same opportunities as their white peers, which impacted their belief in their abilities.

Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in athletics requires intentional efforts from schools, coaches, and the broader community. Participants emphasized the importance of diverse representation among coaching staff, ongoing racial education, and creating an environment that has support for student-athletes of color. Student-athletes shouldn't feel like they are alone or the only one going through this. A strong statement by Sophie highlights this feeling of being alone, "For my club team, I'm like the only person of color on my team. Um, everybody else is like white. Um, so yeah, that's kind of just been like my whole experience for the past... eight years."

While progress has been made and this institution shows that they are using positive strategies such as affinity groups, continued efforts in cultural training, open discussions on race, and leadership-driven community engagement remain essential. By prioritizing these strategies, this athletic program can create positive spaces where all student-athletes feel supported and not alone in their athletics endeavors.

### **Unexpected or Outlier Findings**

Two outliers were revealed during the individual interviews data collection and analysis. The first outlier related to race being correlated with certain sports and some sports not having any correlation with certain races. The second outlier was the coach participants who described how they do not see race within their athletic teams.

### ***Outlier Finding #1***

One notable outlier that emerged during the individual interviews was the perception of race being correlated with certain sports, while other sports appeared to lack such racial associations. Specifically, Black athletes were frequently associated with sports such as basketball. As depicted by Chandler, a Black male basketball coach:

The minute kids on our team or another team see a Black kid on the team, especially in this environment, because we don't have a lot of African Americans in this city, but the minute they see a kid of African American descent, they automatically think that kid's gonna be good.

Participants observed that other sports like volleyball seemed less racially stereotyped and more racially diverse. This pattern was noted not only by student-athletes but also by the coaches in the interviews. This impacts the analysis because there would be less racial pressure associated with certain sports such as volleyball, therefore some student-athletes might choose this sport to reduce stress and pressure. Olivia, a coach talks about how she understands this dynamic:

I can't think of a time where there's been, it's not about race as much as it about size or athletic ability. Does that make sense? Like for volleyball, you have people who are smaller so then they think, oh, I can't hit, or I can't do this because I'm not tall. And I'm like, you can do all of those things. Or like, I'm too short to play volleyball. So like for me, I see more of the confidence around physical ability than race.

From a Critical Race Theory perspective, this racial sorting of sports reinforces the tenet of race being a social construct that shapes perceptions and opportunities. The normalization of certain racial groups in specific sports suggests that historical factors continue to shape how athletes are funneled into sports. This pattern can prove a cycle of expectations and may reinforce

stereotypes for certain individuals. In terms of Self-Efficacy Theory, if student-athletes internalize messages—explicit or implicit—that certain sports are not "for them" based on race, this could lower their self-efficacy in those sports and limit their willingness to participate or persist. Emma, a student-athlete, explains how this exists in swimming:

I feel like being discouraged from playing because of my heritage kind of, I don't know.

It makes it a lot easier to burn out when people are completely avoiding you and when there's not a lot of people that are like you on your team.

### ***Outlier Finding #2***

The second unexpected finding involved one coach participant who emphasized that they do not see race within their athletic teams but rather specific to the region that they live in. This coach framed their approach as one of "colorblindness," asserting that they treat all athletes equally regardless of racial background. This coach Olivia stated that, "It's not like what your, what background you're from. It's just like, we're all from the same place, we all grew up here, we all have the same kind of pressures and things like that." and "I don't know that I've ever had an approach like I'm gonna coach this kid differently because of their color or their race." This coach also later in the interview talked about being mindful and inclusive of all cultures and all races when asked about how schools can better address racial issues. This seeming contradiction highlights the conflicting ways individuals understand identity, belonging, and diversity, perhaps rooted in lived experience. Relating this to student-athlete experiences, hearing this in a locker room at a predominantly White institution may cause pressure to suppress or downplay parts of their racial identity to fit in, especially if the coach and other members of the team identify as White.

The other two coaches talked about how they did see race immediately when a person of color was on their team. This relates to the analysis of the study because while this may indicate an intention to promote fairness. However, from a CRT perspective, this could also mean that these coaches may overlook the unique experiences faced by athletes of color. While the intention behind colorblindness may be rooted in a desire to promote equality, CRT challenges this notion by arguing that "not seeing race" often leads to ignoring the realities that student-athletes of color face. The coaches who immediately recognize race may be more aware of the social and cultural dynamics at play in sports, potentially allowing them to be more responsive to the specific needs of their student-athletes. In terms of Self-Efficacy Theory, student-athletes are more likely to thrive when they feel supported in their experiences. Coaches who ignore race may fail to create that environment, which could negatively affect an athlete's belief in themselves to accomplish their goals.

### **Cross-Participant Analysis**

The results of the research revealed themes from each of the 3 groups and as a whole of the 10 participants. There were commonalities between participants that were found and discussed. However, there were differences between the participants groups, there were two main differences that need to be highlighted. The first difference was that the parent participants and the student-athlete participants both highlighted the need for personal development through sports and talking about race. However, coaches only highlighted the athletic and academic development of student-athletes. The second difference was that the parent and coach participants highlighted the institution, the culture, and the barriers faced, but the student-athlete participants did not talk about this factor in their interviews.

### ***Cross Participants Difference #1***

The cross-participant analysis revealed a difference in how the groups prioritized the outcomes of sports participation. Both parent and student-athlete participants emphasized the need for personal development through sports, particularly in the context of discussing race and identity. In contrast, coach participants predominantly focused on the athletic and academic development of student-athletes. Coaches highlighted the importance of improving athletic performance and achieving academic success as outcomes of sports participation.

### ***Cross Participants Difference #2***

The other difference identified was the focus on institutional culture and barriers. Both parent and coach participants discussed the impact of systemic barriers, institutional policies, and team culture on student-athletes' experiences. The student-athlete participants did not emphasize institutional or cultural barriers in their interviews. Instead, they focused more on their individual experiences, relationships with teammates and coaches, and personal experiences.

## **Examination of Findings**

### ***Summary of Key Findings***

The key findings were the four themes that were created from the research questions. The groups of participants, from student-athletes, coaches, and parents were interviewed and formed four themes. Some highlights of the themes were themes about racial representation, support systems, and barriers. The findings suggest that creating a more inclusive athletic environment requires a commitment from schools to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at all levels. This includes policy changes, leadership initiatives, and a cultural shift that acknowledges and addresses racial disparities in athletics. This specific institution from the interviews, does a good job in creating this environment for student-athletes to thrive in and not feel pressure. That



does not mean that pressure does not exist, as that is on an individual level and examples were shown about feeling pressure. However, the findings show that there are ways to combat the racial pressure that can be faced in athletics.

### ***Interpretation of Findings***

This section will be focusing on the four themes from the participant groups, and the significance of that theme from my perspective as the researcher. The first theme that I want to highlight is the theme of Systemic Factors: Institutional Experiences and Racial Representation in Athletics. The created definition of this theme is “examining how racial identity and systemic structures influence student-athletes' experiences, opportunities, and development within high school athletics.” The belief that this theme was mentioned by the participants is that this is what they see being present and being a student at their institution. While not every student-athlete reported drastic negative experiences, these student-athletes still perceive systemic factors and experiences within their school. Student-athletes want to participate in sports because it is fun and they enjoy it and with systemic issues in place, by the school, this cannot be achieved.

The second theme that will be highlighted is Social and Psychological Factors: Coping, Mental Health, and Self-Efficacy. The definition of this theme is “exploring how student-athletes of color navigate racial pressures, build resilience, and develop self-efficacy in response to challenges in athletics and academics.” The reason believed that this theme was mentioned was because participants talked about racial issues that they need to resolve or work through. This is why support services are needed at all institutions for adolescents; they go through life, and it can be difficult. People need strategies to be able to go through this and coping and going through mental health are two of those. If the majority of student-athletes have a mental health

issue that they are working through especially dealing with race, then shouldn't educational leaders want to do everything they can to help?

The next theme to emphasize was Support Systems: School, Community, and Advocacy for Equity. The definition of this theme is "highlighting the role of coaches, parents, and institutional support in fostering an inclusive and empowering environment for student-athletes of color." This theme was talked about by the participants because they believe that creating a support system for BIPOC high school student-athletes is important to do. Parents want schools to help support their student population if they are going to be participating in athletics at that institution and student-athletes want to feel supported.

The final theme that will be mentioned is Future Strategies: Advancing Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Athletics. The created definition of this theme is "identifying policies, practices, and cultural shifts needed to create more equitable opportunities and inclusive spaces within high school athletics." As mentioned in the previous literature in Chapter Two, there are eight million high school athletes in the United States who participate in sports through national federations. These federations make it clear in their mission statements that high school student-athletes benefit from participating in sports, in the current and in their futures (Camiré, 2014). If athletic programs do not support student-athletes in the current, this will create more challenges for student-athletes in the future. Student-athletes have great ideas on the best ways to support them. That is why giving them a voice to share those ways is important and can be used to build policy and practice for high school athletic programs.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented four overarching themes that illustrate the lived experiences of student-athletes of color from their perspectives and the perspectives of coaches and parents at

the institution. The findings also get contributions from both Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory by helping to explain the systemic barriers and individual supports that BIPOC student-athletes experience in the private school and high school settings. By forming a connection to these theoretical frameworks, the research provides actionable strategies to foster equity, resilience, and self-efficacy within high school athletics. Systemic factors related to institutional experiences and racial representation highlight the structural inequalities that shape athletic experiences. Social and psychological factors reveal an emotional toll can be taken and there is a resilience required to navigate racial pressures in high school sports. The role of support systems emphasizes the importance of mentorship, advocacy, and inclusive policies in creating student success. Lastly, future strategies for advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity in athletics provide insight into the necessary steps for creating a more supportive environment for BIPOC high school student-athletes.

The findings presented in this chapter set the foundation for a deeper discussion of their broader implications, which will be explored in Chapter 5. This next chapter will examine how the findings contribute to existing literature, discussion and interpretation of the results, and recommendations for policy and practice. Chapter 5 will also address the study's limitations and propose directions for future research, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the study's impact and significance.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of racial pressures on BIPOC high school student-athletes, examining these experiences through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. The study addressed two primary research questions:

RQ1: How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?

RQ2: What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color and improve their overall educational experiences?

This chapter begins by examining study-specific insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between racial pressures and high school athletics. Then, the focus will be on the policy and practical recommendations for BIPOC student-athletes who participate in high school athletics. It further explores the study's limitations and suggestions for future research and directions. Finally, a discussion of the current timeliness of the study regarding Critical Race Theory and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in America and then a conclusion to this study and paper.

### **Study-Specific Contributions**

This study provides several study-specific contributions to the topic of high school student-athletes and racial pressures within high school athletics. This offers insight into three key areas for the study: the marginalization of BIPOC student-athletes, the unique dynamics within private school athletics, and the value of a participant-driven research approach. Each of

these contributions deepens the understanding of how this study fits into the high school athletic experience and the past research.

A key contribution of this study is its small role on portraying issues within private school athletics. Unlike public schools, private schools often have smaller, more affluent student populations and limited racial diversity. The findings reveal how systemic barriers within these institutions—such as lack of representation, cultural misunderstandings, and institutional inequities—shape the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes. Themes that include institutional barriers, racial representation within the athletic experience, and coping and mental health in athletics illuminate how private school environments often perpetuate exclusionary practices. At the same time, this study identifies potential strengths within private schools, such as tighter-knit communities and more accessible support systems, which could be leveraged to address inequities.

The study's setting in the Southwest United States adds an important layer of cultural and racial complexity to the findings. The Southwest is characterized by its rich diversity, with no single racial majority in many areas. Despite this diversity, the findings highlight the persistent marginalization of BIPOC student-athletes within predominantly White settings. Themes such as systemic factors, social and psychological factors, and support systems show how this impacts the experiences of student-athletes in the region.

A strength of this specific study is its participant-driven approach, which puts the voices of student-athletes, parents, and coaches at the forefront. The multiple perspectives of these populations provide a view of the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes. For example, student-athletes shared personal stories of navigating stereotypes, while coaches highlighted institutional shortcomings in representation and mentorship. Parents added critical insights into the broader

social and community factors affecting their children's experiences. By showing these different perspectives, the study helps to capture the racial pressures in high school athletics and spotlights the roles of schools, families, and communities.

This study contributes to an understanding of how racial pressures show up in private school athletics within the Southwest U.S. Its participant-driven approach ensures that the voices of BIPOC student-athletes, their parents, and their coaches are at the center of this critical conversation.

### **Policy and Practice Recommendations**

#### ***Policy Recommendations***

The findings of this study prove that there is a need for policies that continue to promote DEI within schools and athletic programs. Even schools that excel at not having a drastic experiences of racial pressure such as this school need continuous policies to promote DEI. Even with policies being changed at the government level by the new administration, it is important to have these types of programs in schools and athletic programs present (Hinton & Lambert, 2022). It is argued that DEI is important because it drives innovation, improves problem-solving, and makes areas more representative and applicable to everyone. DEI ensures fair access to opportunities, breaks down systemic barriers, and promotes ethical responsibility within institutions. By having diverse student populations and getting their perspectives, DEI leads to better outcomes and helps address the needs of all communities effectively (Hinton & Lambert, 2022). Schools should adopt DEI initiatives that prioritize representation in leadership roles, including coaching and administrative positions. By ensuring that athletic staff reflect the diversity of the student-athlete population, schools can build environments where BIPOC student-athletes feel supported. These initiatives should also include the establishment of DEI

student committees within schools and athletic associations to oversee the development and implementation of equitable practices within athletic teams. These committees should be overseen by someone trained in these topics and could focus on reviewing policies and addressing student concerns. However, DEI is being criticized currently, which is talked about at the end of this study.

To address the small number of systemic barriers and microaggressions highlighted in the study, it is suggested that coaches take training programs on cultural competence and racial advocacy. These annual programs should equip coaches with the knowledge and skills to understand the unique challenges faced by BIPOC student-athletes, from combating stereotypes to creating inclusive team cultures. Training should also include practical tools for coaches to advocate for racial equity within their programs and to serve as allies and support systems for their athletes. Policies requiring annual DEI training and accountability metrics for athletic staff would ensure that these efforts are sustained and impactful. The last policy recommendation, schools and athletic programs should implement systems for reporting and addressing racial discrimination, creating a safer and more equitable environment for all participants. This institution does have a policy and system in place to report any and all types of racial discrimination on campus. This institution also has educational programming where students learn about different topics, included in that is reporting procedures and racial education topics. However, in the current context these types of programs may be harder to implement from a policy level and could face backlash in schools that rely on federal funding.

### ***Practical Recommendations***

In addition to policy reforms, practical recommendations are important to directly address the needs of BIPOC student-athletes at these high schools. Expanding mental health support that

is specifically for BIPOC high school student-athletes is a critical step. Participants talked about how they did not have access to or didn't know how to access mental health support. Schools should offer counseling services specifically trained to address the unique pressures faced by BIPOC student-athletes, such as mental health counselors for student-athletes. These services could include group therapy sessions, stress management workshops, and partnerships with community organizations specializing in sports mental health. Access to these programs should be improved by completing school-wide awareness campaigns or having direct referrals from coaches.

Mentorship programs should also be implemented to address any lack of racial representation. This was talked about by different participants, they want to have people they can approach to help with issues that may come up. Schools should actively recruit diverse mentors, including former BIPOC student-athletes, to support current student-athletes through both their athletic and academic journeys. These mentorship programs could provide structured opportunities for one-on-one guidance, group discussions, and personal development. Schools can also integrate leadership development components into these programs, helping student-athletes build confidence and other skills.

Creating affinity groups on high school campuses is another recommendation for this study. Affinity groups were mentioned multiple times by individuals in the study and how effective they were. Affinity groups were said by participants to provide a safe space for individuals to connect, share experiences, advocate for change, and feel supported within an organization. These affinity groups were based on race, but expanding that further, they could also connect with sports. It is highly recommended that schools create affinity groups but have



sport-specific groups as well. This will help student-athletes feel supported as a BIPOC student but also as a BIPOC student-athlete.

Lastly, schools should invest in monthly community-building initiatives that build stronger connections between parents, students, coaches, and school staff. Events such as cultural appreciation nights, family workshops, and open educational forums on race in athletics can promote understanding and collaboration. These initiatives should aim to create networks of support that empower BIPOC student-athletes and their families, while also encouraging staff and administrators to engage actively in efforts to dismantle systemic inequities. Specific events could have student-athlete panel discussions or guest speakers within the community, this could be virtual or in-person. The virtual meetings will save money for schools, but in-person events can help create more community building. This can be tracked using attendance rates and post-event surveys to see if these are being run appropriately and are being useful for the community. By prioritizing inclusive community engagement, schools can cultivate environments where every student-athlete feels supported both on and off the field or court of their choice.

### **Study Limitations Overview**

The participants in the study met the setting and participant guidelines outlined in Chapter Three. All 10 participants were involved in high school athletics to the capacity to meet the criteria for the study. Decisions were made before conducting data collection, to effectively answer the research questions. The study acknowledges the limitations and delimitations as outlined in the preceding section.

### ***Study Limitations***

The research revealed three potential limitations to the study, limited longitudinal perspective, variation in private schools and policies, and limitations within sample size and

geographic area. While the research focused on a specific time period of the student athletes' lives: being a sophomore, junior, or senior, it did not have any longitudinal focus. The racial pressure that they feel right now could change at different times of their high school experience. To fully understand this, more longitudinal data would need to be collected.

Since this study was done at a private school, the policies and the school in general are unique from others. Private schools are different from public schools because they do not have to follow certain guidelines set by the federal government to get funding. This means that policies may be unique to a certain school, or they might have more access to include certain policies at their institution. Some participants talked about the slight differences between the two types of schools such as diversity and teacher support. However, it was not directly examined or sought out in the context of this study.

Lastly, the sample size was limited to 10 individuals and to the geographical region of the Southwestern United States (US Census Bureau, 2020). While the goal was to include ten student-athletes, five coaches, and five parents, the final participant pool consisted of three student-athletes, four coaches, and three parents. This smaller sample size limited the ability to capture a broader range of experiences, particularly from athletes in different grade levels, genders, or sports. The study's findings remain valuable, but a larger participant pool could have strengthened the conclusions and allowed for more generalizable findings.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are five different recommendations to be made for future research that deals with racial pressures of high school BIPOC student-athletes. Those are to explore larger, more diverse participant groups across multiple regions in the US, in a study such as a quantitative format. Secondly, investigate racial pressures in public high schools for comparative insights. Third,

study longitudinal impacts of racial identity and systemic supports on BIPOC student-athletes' academic and athletic outcomes. Fourth, bring in school administrators, athletic directors, and policymakers to get their perspective. Lastly, expand the focus to intersectional identities in athletics, for example, gender or socioeconomic status. Each recommendation will be broken down to explain what this should look like for a future research study.

One of the most significant opportunities for future research is to include a larger and more diverse participant group across multiple regions, in a format such as a quantitative study. Expanding the sample size beyond a single geographic location would allow for a broader range of experiences, capturing regional differences in how racial pressures are experienced. This could also lead to more specific policies based on different regions or population types. This would help the results become generalized so that recommendations for policies can be made. This would likely need to be done through a large nationwide high school association such as National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), since most high schools are NFHS members through their state association.

Additionally, future studies should investigate racial pressures in public high schools to compare results. Private and public schools operate within different structures, policies, and resource distributions, all of these can shape the experiences of BIPOC student-athletes in unique ways. Public schools often serve more diverse student populations, and an examination of racial pressures within these environments could reveal important contrasts or similarities to those found in private schools.

Another critical area for future research is the longitudinal impact of race and systemic support on BIPOC student-athletes' academic and athletic outcomes. While this study captures experiences at a specific point in time, a longitudinal approach would allow researchers to track

how racial pressures influence student-athletes over multiple years. Investigating factors beyond high school such as college experiences, involvement in sports, and academic opportunities. This could provide insights into how race and support shape future opportunities.

This study primarily focused on the perspectives of student-athletes, parents, and coaches, but future research should further explore the perspectives of school administrators, athletic directors, and policymakers. These individuals design and implement policies and create environments that impact BIPOC student-athletes, yet their viewpoints were not deeply examined in this study.

Finally, future research should incorporate a more intersectional approach to understanding racial pressures in high school athletics. While this study focused on race, it did not deeply explore how other identities—such as gender or socioeconomic status—intersect with race to shape student-athletes' experiences. For instance, the challenges faced by an affluent Black female volleyball player may differ from those of a low-income Latinx male soccer player, both of whom differ in their gender, race, and socioeconomic statuses.

By addressing these five areas, future research can build upon this study's findings and contribute to a more complete understanding of racial pressures in athletics. Expanding participant groups, exploring different school environments, adopting a longitudinal approach, incorporating institutional perspectives, and embracing intersectionality will allow for a more in-depth and actionable examination of how race and systemic issues shape the experiences of BIPOC high school student-athletes.

### **Timeliness of the Study**

This study is timely given the current political climate, where DEI initiatives are facing widespread political and legislative challenges under the new administration. Across the United

States, policies aimed at fostering racial equity in education and athletics are being dismantled, restricted, or outright banned, limiting institutional efforts to create supportive environments for BIPOC students. This ban includes the taking away of funding if rules are not abided by regarding DEI and also the threat of legal action against individuals or institutions. As policymakers and politicians push back against DEI programs, this research proves the critical need for targeted support systems in high school athletics for BIPOC student-athletes. Removing DEI programs is not just an ideological debate but directly impacts student-athletes who rely on these resources to be able to feel supported.

By showing the real-world experiences of BIPOC student-athletes, this study provides evidence that racial pressures continue to exist and impact student well-being, countering political narratives that attempt to minimize systemic inequalities. Now more than ever, it is important to advocate for policies, mentorship programs, and systemic changes to ensure that student-athletes receive the support they need, especially in the athletic setting.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the racial pressures faced by BIPOC high school student-athletes who attend private schools. This included examining how systems, race, and support structures shape their experiences. Through qualitative interviews with student-athletes, coaches, and parents, the study identified key themes. The findings highlighted the challenges faced by BIPOC student-athletes and the strategies they use to navigate these spaces, emphasizing the need for stronger support systems within schools and athletic programs. The study builds on Critical Race Theory by centering counter-storytelling and exposing systemic issues, while Self-Efficacy Theory helped frame the impact of mentorship, representation, and institutional support on student-athletes' confidence and success.

Ultimately, this study shows that it is important to create environments where BIPOC student-athletes can thrive, not just be in. Private schools such as this one, do a great job of building community since they are mostly smaller communities. However, addressing racial disparities in high school athletics requires intentional policy changes, cultural competence training, and community engagement efforts that prioritize representation, support, and advocacy. By implementing these changes, schools and athletic programs can ensure that all student-athletes have access to opportunities for growth, success, and belonging because high school athletics should be a place where student-athletes can grow personally and developmentally. Student-athletes should be in an environment that is enjoyable and that is what every student-athlete deserves and as the adults, we should provide for them.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

- Script to open the interview, describe what will occur, mandatory reporting.
- Background info on participant
  - Starting questions (5 minutes)
- 1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself, including your sports involvement and athletic goals?
- 2. How long have you been involved in your sport, and what motivated you to start?
- Research / Interview Questions
  - Based on the question “How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?” (15-20 minutes)
- 1. How do you perceive race within your sports team and school environment?
- 2. Can you describe any experiences where you felt your race influenced your sports involvement or opportunities?
- 3. Have you ever felt that racial stereotypes affected your confidence in sports?
  - a. If so, how?
- 4. In what ways do you think racial pressures have influenced your pursuit of athletics?
- 5. How do you think these experiences have shaped your overall high school experience and your goals for the future?
  - Based on the question “What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color better and improve their overall educational experiences?” (15-20 minutes)

6. What types of support (academic, emotional, social) have you received from your school, coaches, or community?
7. How effective do you find the current support systems available to student-athletes of color at your school?
8. What additional support do you think would have been beneficial for you as a student-athlete of color?
9. Can you suggest any changes that schools or athletic programs could implement to better support student-athletes of color?
10. How do you believe schools can better address racial issues to improve the overall educational experience for student-athletes of color?
  - Concluding questions (5 minutes)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a student-athlete of color?
12. Do you have any advice for other student-athletes of color who are just starting their high school sports journeys?

#### Interview Protocol for Parent Participants

- Script to open the interview, describe what will occur
  - Background info on participant
    - Starting questions (5 minutes)
1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself and your student-athlete, including your own and your student-athlete's sports involvement and athletic goals?
  2. How long has your student-athlete been involved in their sport, and what motivated them to start?



- Research / Interview Questions

- Based on Question: “How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?” (15-20 minutes)

1. How do you perceive race within your student-athlete's athletic team and school environment?
2. Can you describe any experiences where you felt your student-athlete's race influenced their sports involvement or opportunities?
3. Have you ever felt that racial stereotypes affected your student-athlete's confidence in sports?
  - a. If so, how?
4. In what ways do you think racial pressures have influenced your student-athlete's athletic experiences?
5. How do you think these experiences have shaped your student-athlete's overall high school experience and their goals for the future?
  - Based on Question: “What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color better and improve their overall educational experiences?” (15-20 minutes)
6. What types of support (academic, emotional, social) have your student-athletes received from their school, coaches, or community?
7. How effective do you find the current support systems available to student-athletes of color at your student-athlete's school?

8. What additional support do you think would have been beneficial for your student-athlete as a student-athlete of color?
9. Can you suggest any changes that schools or athletic programs could implement to better support student-athletes of color?
10. How do you believe schools can better address racial issues to improve the overall educational experience for student-athletes of color?
  - Concluding questions (5 minutes)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your student-athlete's experiences as a student-athlete of color?
12. Do you have any advice for other parents of student-athletes of color who are just starting high school athletics?

#### Interview Protocol for Coaches

- Script to open the interview, describe what will occur
- Background info on participant
  - Starting questions (5 minutes)
- 1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself, including your coaching background and experience with high school sports?
- 2. How long have you been coaching, and what motivated you to become a coach?
- Research / Interview Questions
  - Based on Question: “How do racial pressures, examined through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, influence high school student-athlete experiences?” (15-20 minutes)

1. How do you perceive race within your sports team and the school environment?
2. Can you describe any experiences where you felt a student-athlete's race influenced their sports involvement or opportunities?
3. Have you observed racial stereotypes affecting student-athletes' confidence in sports?
  - a. If so, how?
4. In what ways do you think racial pressures have influenced student-athletes' athletic experiences?
5. How do you think these experiences have shaped student-athletes' overall high school experiences and their goals for the future?
  - o Based on Question: "What systemic and individual supports can be implemented to assist high school student-athletes of color better and improve their overall educational experiences?" (15-20 minutes)
6. What types of support (academic, emotional, social) have you observed or provided to student-athletes of color?
7. How effective do you find the current support systems available to student-athletes of color at your school?
8. What additional support do you think would be beneficial for student-athletes of color?
9. Can you suggest any changes that schools or athletic programs could implement to better support student-athletes of color?
10. How do you believe schools can better address racial issues to improve the overall educational experience for student-athletes of color?
  - o Concluding questions (5 minutes)

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences coaching student-athletes of color?

12. Do you have any advice for other coaches working with student-athletes of color?

### APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT DATA

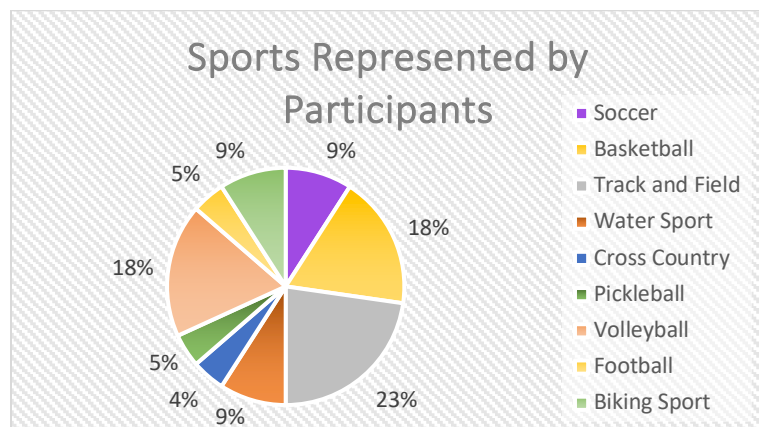
- Participant information data for student-athletes, parent participants, and coaches
- Example table:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Sport(s) Played, Coached, or Parent In</b>	<b>Race of Participant</b>	<b>Participant Category</b>
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Soccer, Basketball, T&F	Black or African American	Student-Athlete
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Water Polo, Swimming	Native American or Alaska Native	Student-Athlete
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Volleyball, T&F	Black or African American	Student-Athlete
Female	Varsity	Volleyball (girls and boys)	Asian or Pacific Islander	Coach
Male	Varsity	Basketball	Black or African American	Coach
Female	Varsity	Volleyball	White	Coach
Female	Varsity	Pickleball, Cross Country, T&F	Asian or Pacific Islander	Coach
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Soccer, Basketball, T&F	Hispanic	Parent
Male	8 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup>	BMX, Basketball, Football, Mountain Biking	Black or African American	Parent
Female	11 <sup>th</sup>	Volleyball, T&F	Black or African American	Parent

## APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT SPORT DATA

Figure 1

- Sports Represented by Participants



## APPENDIX D – DEMOGRAPHIC INTEREST SURVEYS

### Demographic Interest Survey for Student-Athletes

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study to learn more about student-athletes!

Your input is valuable in helping us understand high school student-athletes. Please answer the following demographic interest questions to gauge how you best fit in the study, your answers will be treated as you are interested in being a part of the study. If you fit the criteria for the study, you will be contacted by your athletic director and the researcher.

1. What is your name? (write-in)
2. What sports do you participate in as part of an organized activity? (write-in)
3. What grade are you currently in?

9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>

4. Which most accurately describes you?

Woman, Man, Transgender, Non-binary/non-conforming, Prefer not to respond.

5. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, White, Native American or Alaska Native, Other (please specify)

#### Demographic Interest Survey for Parent Participants

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study to learn more about student-athletes!

Your input is valuable in helping us understand high school student-athletes' experiences. Please answer the following demographic interest questions to gauge how you best fit in the study, your answers will be treated as you are interested in being a part of the study. If you fit the criteria for the study, you will be contacted by your athletic director and the researcher.

1. What is your name? (write-in)
2. Do you have a current student-athlete who participates in athletics at the high school level?

Yes, No

3. What sports does your student-athlete participate in? (write-in)
4. What grade are they currently in?

9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>

5. Did you participate in athletics when you were in high school?

Yes, No

6. Which most accurately describes you?

Woman, Man, Transgender, Non-binary/non-conforming, Prefer not to respond

7. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, White, Native American or Alaska Native, Other (please specify)

## Demographic Interest Survey for Coaches

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study to learn more about student-athletes!

Your input is valuable in helping us understand high school student-athletes. Please answer the following demographic interest questions to gauge how you best fit in the study, your answers will be treated as you are interested in being a part of the study. If you fit the criteria for the study, you will be contacted by your athletic director and the researcher.

1. What is your name? (write-in)
2. How long have you been a coach at your current institution? (write-in)
3. What sports do you coach as part of an organized activity? (write-in)
4. Have you coached at the varsity or junior varsity level?

Yes, No

5. Which most accurately describes you?

Woman, Man, Transgender, Non-binary/non-conforming, Prefer not to respond

6. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, White, Native American or Alaska Native, Other (please specify)

## **APPENDIX E – RECRUITMENT EMAIL AND FLYER**

Email / Flyer for Recruitment

Subject: Participate in a Research Study for High School Student-Athletes

Dear Athletic Director,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Emilio Ulibarri, and I am a Doctoral student at the University of Arizona. I am inviting you to reach out to student-athletes, parents, and coaches at your school to participate in an exciting research study aimed at understanding the racial

pressures that sophomore, junior, and senior high school student-athletes who are participating in high school sports are facing. You can forward this interest survey to your student-athletes who participate in athletics at your school.

#### Study Overview:

My research aims to gain valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of student-athletes who are participating in sports at their high school. The title of the study is "Examining the Racial Pressure on Student-Athletes in Secondary Schools." Your participation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the pressures and well-being of student-athletes.

#### Why Participate?:

- Make Your Voice Heard: This is an opportunity for you to share your experiences, perspectives, and stories to make a positive impact on the future of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color student-athletes.
- Contribute to Research: Your participation will help researchers, athletic administrators, and coaches better support student-athletes in achieving their goals.

#### Participant Criteria:

I am specifically seeking sophomore, junior, and senior high school student-athletes who are currently participating in high school athletics and identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color to interview for the study. Your unique perspective as an aspiring high school athlete is crucial to the success of this study. I am also seeking parents of Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color student-athletes to be a part of the study. Lastly, I am seeking high school coaches to be a part of the study.

#### How to Participate:



If you are interested in participating, please click on the following link to access the Demographic Interest Survey: [Link to Survey]

Confidentiality:

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous in the research findings. Your privacy is of the utmost importance to the study.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please get in touch with me at [emilioulibarri@arizona.edu](mailto:emilioulibarri@arizona.edu) or with Dr. Ashley Dominguez.

I genuinely appreciate your consideration of this invitation and hope you will join us in getting student-athletes to contribute to this meaningful research. Your input is invaluable in shaping the future experiences of student-athletes like yourself.

Thank you for your time,

Emilio Ulibarri - University of Arizona Doctoral Student

[emilioulibarri@arizona.edu](mailto:emilioulibarri@arizona.edu)

Dr. Ashley Dominguez

[ashddominguez@arizona.edu](mailto:ashddominguez@arizona.edu)

# PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Calling All Sophomore, Junior, and Senior High School Student-Athletes!

Are You Participating in Sports at Your High School and Want to Contribute to Research?

## Examining the Racial Pressure on Student-Athletes in Secondary Schools

This research seeks to gain valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color student-athletes who are playing sports in the high school setting.

Your participation will contribute to a deeper understanding of racial pressures and the well-being of student-athletes.

- Make a Difference: Share your journey and help shape the future for aspiring student-athletes.

- Be Heard: Your experiences matter, and this is your chance to be a voice for student-athletes nationwide.

## Location / Requirements

- Preliminary conversation over Zoom with parent present
- 30-45 minute semi-structured interview over Zoom or in-person

## Are you eligible?

- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior high school student-athletes
- Participating in High School Athletics
- Self-identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.

If you're unsure if you meet the requirements or have any other questions, email the study team:

Emilio Ulibarri - Doctoral Student  
emilioulbarri@arizona.edu

Dr. Ashley Dominguez  
ashddominguez@arizona.edu



Demographic Interest Survey: [QR Code to Survey].

## APPENDIX F – YOUTH ASSENT FORM

### Youth Assent Form

<b>Study title</b>	Examining the Racial Pressure on Student-Athletes in Secondary Schools
<b>Researcher</b>	Emilio Ulibarri, University of Arizona Doctoral Student

I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

#### Overview

**Purpose:** This research seeks to gain valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color high school student-athletes. Your participation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the pressures and overall well-being of student-athletes.

**Procedures:** Two interviews, one as a preliminary conversation and the other as a semi-structured interview.

**Time Commitment:** Approximately 1 – 1.5 hours over two dates.

**Benefits:** Make your voice heard and contribute to research.

#### What is the purpose of this study?

To understand the racial pressures that sophomore, junior, and senior high school high school student-athletes who are participating in sports are facing.

#### What will you do?

Before the semi-structured interviews for the study, there will be a preliminary conversation. This will help the researcher and the participants meet each other for the first time and help the interviewer and the interviewee make a connection, set expectations, and start a dialogue.

Guardians will be invited to these conversations, and they will last 15-30 minutes. These conversations will be held over Zoom. The main semi-structured interviews will be scheduled with the participants at the end of this conversation.

The research interviews will be 30-45 minutes each and will be conducted one-on-one with the researcher and the participant. The setting for these interviews will either be online through a Zoom meeting or at the school of the researcher in a semi-formal space, such as a meeting room.

#### Risks

Possible risks	How we're minimizing these risks
Psychological or emotional risks (e.g., stress, confusion, guilt, triggering of past emotional experiences).	Establish clear communication, creation of a safe space, use of mindful language. Having a clear response plan. Understanding legal and ethical responsibilities.
Some questions may be personal or upsetting.	You can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

I do not know of any other possible risks associated with this study.

### Other Study Information

<b>Possible benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make your voice heard</li> <li>• Contribute to research</li> </ul>
<b>Estimated number of participants</b>	Up to 10 participants
<b>How long will it take?</b>	Approximately 1- 1.5 hours over two days.
<b>Costs</b>	None
<b>Compensation</b>	\$10 gift card
<b>Future research</b>	Your data won't be used or shared for any future research studies.
<b>Recordings / Photographs</b>	<p>We will record you. The recordings will be used for creating themes within the findings of the study.</p> <p>The recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not participate in this study.</p>

### Data Security

<b>What identifying information will be collected and why?</b>	Demographic Interest Survey – to make sure you fit the criteria to be in the research study.
<b>How long will my data be kept?</b>	Minimum three years.
<b>How is data kept secure?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is anonymous.</li> <li>• We'll remove all identifiers after the final interview.</li> <li>• We'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer.</li> <li>• We'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.</li> <li>• We'll keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.</li> <li>• As with any data collected online, there is always a risk of data being hacked or intercepted. We're using a secure system to collect this data, but we can't completely eliminate this risk.</li> </ul>

### Who might see my data and why?

The researcher	To conduct the study and analyze the data
The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at University of Arizona	To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines
Anyone (public)	We plan to share our findings in publications or presentations. You will not be identified by name. If we quote you, we will use a pseudonym.

Dissertation Committee	To be able to clarify the study is being done correctly and for the purposes of defending the dissertation.
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### **Mandated Reporting**

I am a mandated reporter. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, it can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. We're required to report this to the authorities. This also includes self-harm, if a student discloses possible self-harm or other concerns that would be covered under mandatory reporting. This would include a report to authorities such as child protective services, school authorities, or other relevant agencies. Document the disclosure accurately and promptly, including the time, date, and context of the disclosure, and the student's exact words as much as possible. Resources will be made available for the student after the interview, such as counseling services, hotlines, and other support services.

### **Contact information:**

<b>For questions about the research, problems, or complaints</b>	Emilio Ulibarri	<a href="mailto:emilioulibarri@arizona.edu">emilioulibarri@arizona.edu</a>
<b>For questions about your rights as a research participant, problems, or complaints</b>	IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)	<a href="mailto:vpr-irb@email.arizona.edu">vpr-irb@email.arizona.edu</a>

### **Signatures**

If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study anytime.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **If the participant is a minor or requires a Legally Authorized Representative:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent, Guardian, or Legally Authorized Representative (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent, Guardian, or Legally Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Remember, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw from the study anytime. Do you have any questions about the study? Do you agree to participate?**

## APPENDIX G – PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

### Parental Consent Form

Study title	Examining the Racial Pressure on Student-Athletes in Secondary Schools
Researcher	Emilio Ulibarri, University of Arizona Doctoral Student

### Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) with information that may affect your decision as to whether to let your student-athlete participate in this research study. The person performing the research will describe the study to you and answer all your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether to give your permission for your student-athlete to take part. If you decide to let your student-athlete, be in this study, this form will be used with your permission.

### Overview

**Purpose:** This research seeks to gain valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color high school student-athletes. Your participation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the pressures and overall well-being of student-athletes.

**Procedures:** Two interviews, one as a preliminary conversation and the other as a semi-structured interview. Your student-athlete will be audio and video-recorded.

**Time Commitment:** Approximately 1 – 1.5 hours over two dates.

**Benefits:** Make your voice heard and contribute to research.

### Risks

Possible risks	How we're minimizing these risks
Psychological or emotional risks (e.g., stress, triggering of past emotional experiences).	Establish clear communication, creation of a safe space, use of mindful language. Having a clear response plan. Understanding legal and ethical responsibilities.
Some questions may be personal or upsetting.	They can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

### Other Study Information

<b>Possible benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make their voice heard</li> <li>• Contribute to research</li> </ul>
<b>Estimated number of participants</b>	Up to 10 participants
<b>How long will it take?</b>	Approximately 1- 1.5 hours over two days.
<b>Costs</b>	None
<b>Compensation</b>	\$10 gift card for student-athlete
<b>Future research</b>	Your data won't be used or shared for any future research studies.
<b>Recordings / Photographs</b>	<p>We will record your student-athlete. The recordings will be used for creating themes within the findings of the study.</p> <p>The recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want your student-athlete to be recorded, you should not let them participate in this study.</p>

#### **Does my student-athlete have to participate?**

No, your student-athlete's participation in this study is voluntary. Your student-athlete may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. You can agree to allow your student-athlete to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

#### **What if my student-athlete does not want to participate?**

In addition to your permission, your student-athlete must agree to participate in the study. If your student-athlete does not want to participate, they will not be included in the study, and there will be no penalty. If your student-athlete initially agrees to be in the study, they can change their mind later without any penalty.

#### **Will there be any compensation?**

There will be a \$10 gift card as compensation for participation in the study.

#### **How will your student-athlete's privacy and confidentiality be protected if they participate in this research study?**

<b>What identifying information will be collected and why?</b>	Demographic Interest Survey – to make sure you fit the criteria to be in the research study.
<b>How long will my data be kept?</b>	Minimum three years.
<b>How is data kept secure?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is anonymous.</li> <li>• We'll remove all identifiers after the final interview.</li> <li>• We'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer.</li> <li>• We'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.</li> <li>• We'll keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.</li> </ul>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As with any data collected online, there is always a risk of data being hacked or intercepted. We're using a secure system to collect this data, but we can't completely eliminate this risk.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to your student-athlete will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your student-athlete's research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your student-athlete's participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with your student-athlete, or with your student-athlete's participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, your student-athlete will be audio and video-recorded. Any audio and video recordings will be stored securely, and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for three years and then erased.

#### **Whom to contact with questions about the study?**

Before, during, or after your participation, you can contact the researcher Emilio Ulibarri by sending an email to [emilioulibbarri@arizona.edu](mailto:emilioulibbarri@arizona.edu) with any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed. The University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved this study, and the study number is [STUDY NUMBER].

#### **Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?**

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact the Institutional Review Board anonymously if you wish by email at [vpr-irb@email.arizona.edu](mailto:vpr-irb@email.arizona.edu).

#### **Signature**

You are making a decision about allowing your student-athlete to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your student-athlete to participate in the study, you may discontinue his or her participation at any time. You will be given a copy of this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Student-Athlete

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## APPENDIX H – ADULT CONSENT FORM

### Adult Consent Form

<b>Study title</b>	Examining the Pressures of Student-Athletes in Secondary Schools
<b>Researcher</b>	Emilio Ulibarri, University of Arizona Doctoral Student

I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

#### Overview

**Purpose:** This research seeks to gain valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color high school student-athletes. Your participation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the pressures and overall well-being of student-athletes.

**Procedures:** Two interviews, one as a preliminary conversation and the other as a semi-structured interview.

**Time Commitment:** Approximately 1 – 1.5 hours over two dates.

**Benefits:** Make your voice heard and contribute to research.

#### What is the purpose of this study?

To understand the racial pressures that sophomore, junior, and senior high school high school student-athletes who are participating in sports are facing.

#### What will you do?

Before the semi-structured interviews for the study, there will be a preliminary conversation. This will help the researcher and the participants meet each other for the first time and help the interviewer and the interviewee make a connection, set expectations, and start a dialogue.

Guardians will be invited to these conversations, and they will last 15-30 minutes. These conversations will be held over Zoom. The main semi-structured interviews will be scheduled with the participants at the end of this conversation.

The research interviews will be 30-45 minutes each and will be conducted one-on-one with the researcher and the participant. The setting for these interviews will either be online through a Zoom meeting or at the school of the researcher in a semi-formal space, such as a meeting room.

#### Risks

Possible risks	How we're minimizing these risks
Psychological or emotional risks (e.g., stress, confusion, guilt, triggering of past emotional experiences).	Establish clear communication, creation of a safe space, use of mindful language. Having a clear response plan. Understanding legal and ethical responsibilities.
Some questions may be personal or upsetting.	You can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

I do not know of any other possible risks associated with this study.

### Other Study Information

<b>Possible benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make your voice heard</li> <li>• Contribute to research</li> </ul>
<b>Estimated number of participants</b>	Up to 5 participants
<b>How long will it take?</b>	Approximately 1- 1.5 hours over two days.
<b>Costs</b>	None
<b>Compensation</b>	\$10 gift card
<b>Future research</b>	Your data won't be used or shared for any future research studies.
<b>Recordings / Photographs</b>	<p>We will record you. The recordings will be used for creating themes within the findings of the study.</p> <p>The recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not participate in this study.</p>

### Data Security

<b>What identifying information will be collected and why?</b>	Demographic Interest Survey – to make sure you fit the criteria to be in the research study.
<b>How long will my data be kept?</b>	Minimum three years.
<b>How is data kept secure?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is anonymous.</li> <li>• We'll remove all identifiers after the final interview.</li> <li>• We'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer.</li> <li>• We'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.</li> <li>• We'll keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.</li> <li>• As with any data collected online, there is always a risk of data being hacked or intercepted. We're using a secure system to collect this data, but we can't completely eliminate this risk.</li> </ul>

### Who might see my data and why?

The researcher	To conduct the study and analyze the data
The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at University of Arizona	To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines
Anyone (public)	We plan to share our findings in publications or presentations. You will not be identified by name. If we quote you, we will use a pseudonym.

Dissertation Committee	To be able to clarify the study is being done correctly and for the purposes of defending the dissertation.
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**Contact information:**

<b>For questions about the research, problems, or complaints</b>	Emilio Ulibarri	<a href="mailto:emilioulibbarri@arizona.edu">emilioulibbarri@arizona.edu</a>
<b>For questions about your rights as a research participant, problems, or complaints</b>	IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)	<a href="mailto:ypr-irb@email.arizona.edu">ypr-irb@email.arizona.edu</a>

**Signatures**

If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study anytime.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Remember, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw from the study anytime. Do you have any questions about the study? Do you agree to participate?**

## **APPENDIX I – PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION**

### **Preliminary Conversation for Student-Athletes**

#### **Introduction:**

Welcome and thank both the student-athlete and parent for participating in the research study.

Briefly introduce the purpose of the study: to gain insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of student-athletes and their parents.

#### **Conversation:**

Ask each participant to introduce themselves, including their name, grade, and the student-athlete's sport.

#### **Memorable Sports Moments:**

Share and reminisce about memorable sports moments, the student-athlete's personal experiences, or significant sports events that the family enjoyed.

#### **Past Relationship with Sport:**

Ask the student-athlete about their start to playing the sport they play and how that came about.

Discuss any challenges or concerns the parent may have regarding their child's participation in sports, such as time commitments, injuries, or academic pressures.

#### **Closing:**

Thank both participants for their openness and insights.

Provide an opportunity for any additional comments or concerns.

Outline the next steps in the research process, including follow-up interviews or surveys if applicable.

Assure confidentiality and ethical treatment of the gathered information.

## **Preliminary Conversation for Parents**

### **Introduction:**

Welcome and thank the parents for participating in the research study.

Briefly introduce the purpose of the study: to gain insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of student-athletes and their parents.

### **Conversation:**

Ask each participant to introduce themselves, including their name, their student-athletes grade, and the student-athlete's sport.

### **Memorable Sports Moments:**

Share and reminisce about memorable sports moments from their career or their student-athletes, the student-athlete's personal experiences, or significant sports events that the family enjoyed.

### **Past Relationship with Sport:**

Ask the parent participant about their start to playing the sport they play and how that came about.

Discuss any challenges or concerns they may have regarding their child's participation in sports, such as time commitments, injuries, or academic pressures.

### **Closing:**

Thank participant for their openness and insights.

Provide an opportunity for any additional comments or concerns.

Outline the next steps in the research process, including follow-up interviews or surveys if applicable.

Assure confidentiality and ethical treatment of the gathered information.

**Preliminary Conversation for Coaches****Introduction:**

Welcome and thank them for participating in the research study.

Briefly introduce the purpose of the study: to gain insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of student-athletes and their parents.

**Conversation:**

Ask each participant to introduce themselves, including their name, sports coaches, and their experience.

**Memorable Sports Moments:**

Share and reminisce about memorable sports moments, their personal experiences, or significant sports events that they enjoyed.

**Past Relationship with Sport:**

Ask the coach about their start to coaching the sport they play and how that came about.

Discuss any challenges or concerns the coach may have regarding their participation in coaching, such as time commitments, injuries, or academic pressures.

**Closing:**

Thank participant for their openness and insights.

Provide an opportunity for any additional comments or concerns.

Outline the next steps in the research process, including follow-up interviews or surveys if applicable.

Assure confidentiality and ethical treatment of the gathered information.

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